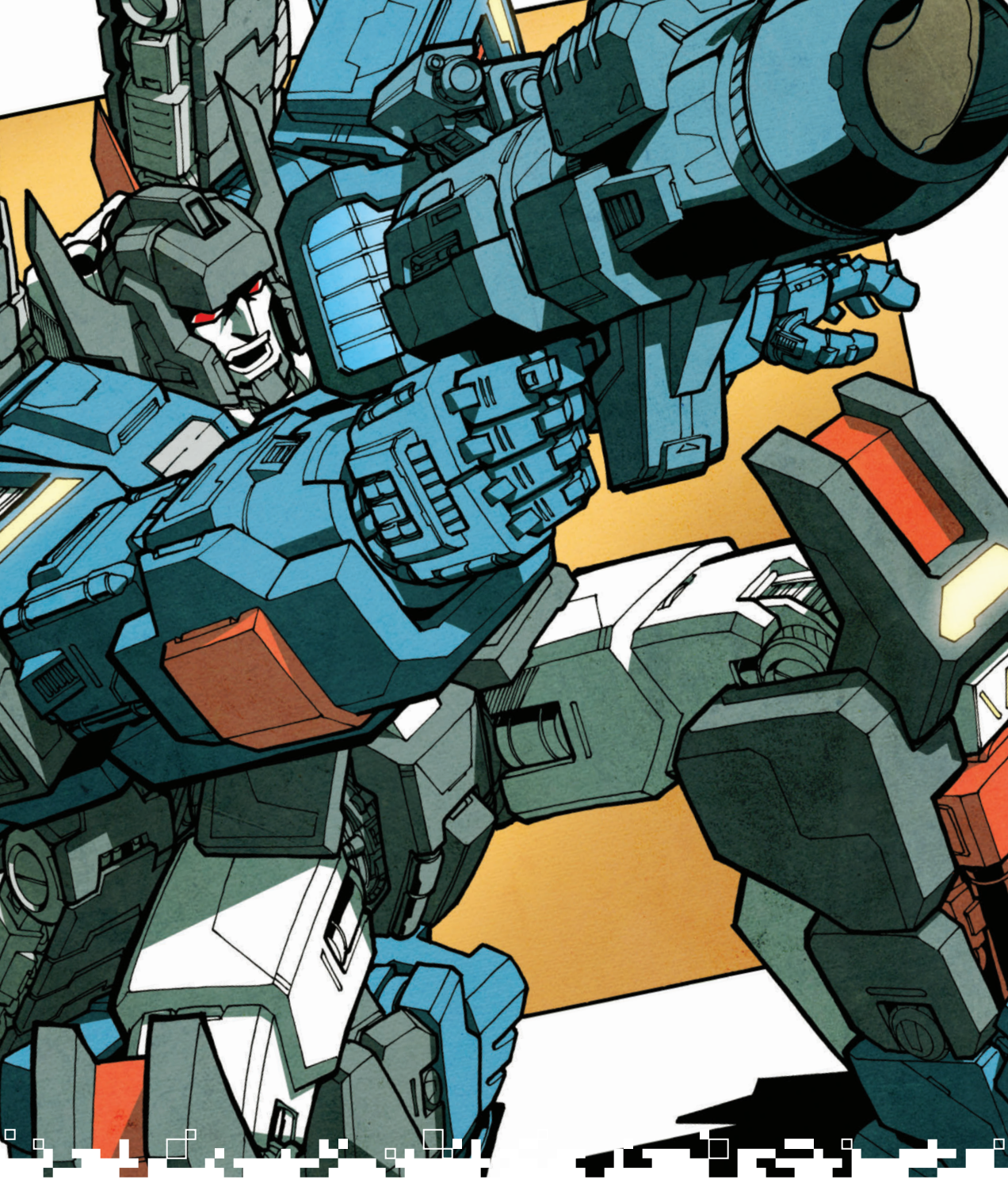
THE TRANSFORMERS
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
VOLUME 4



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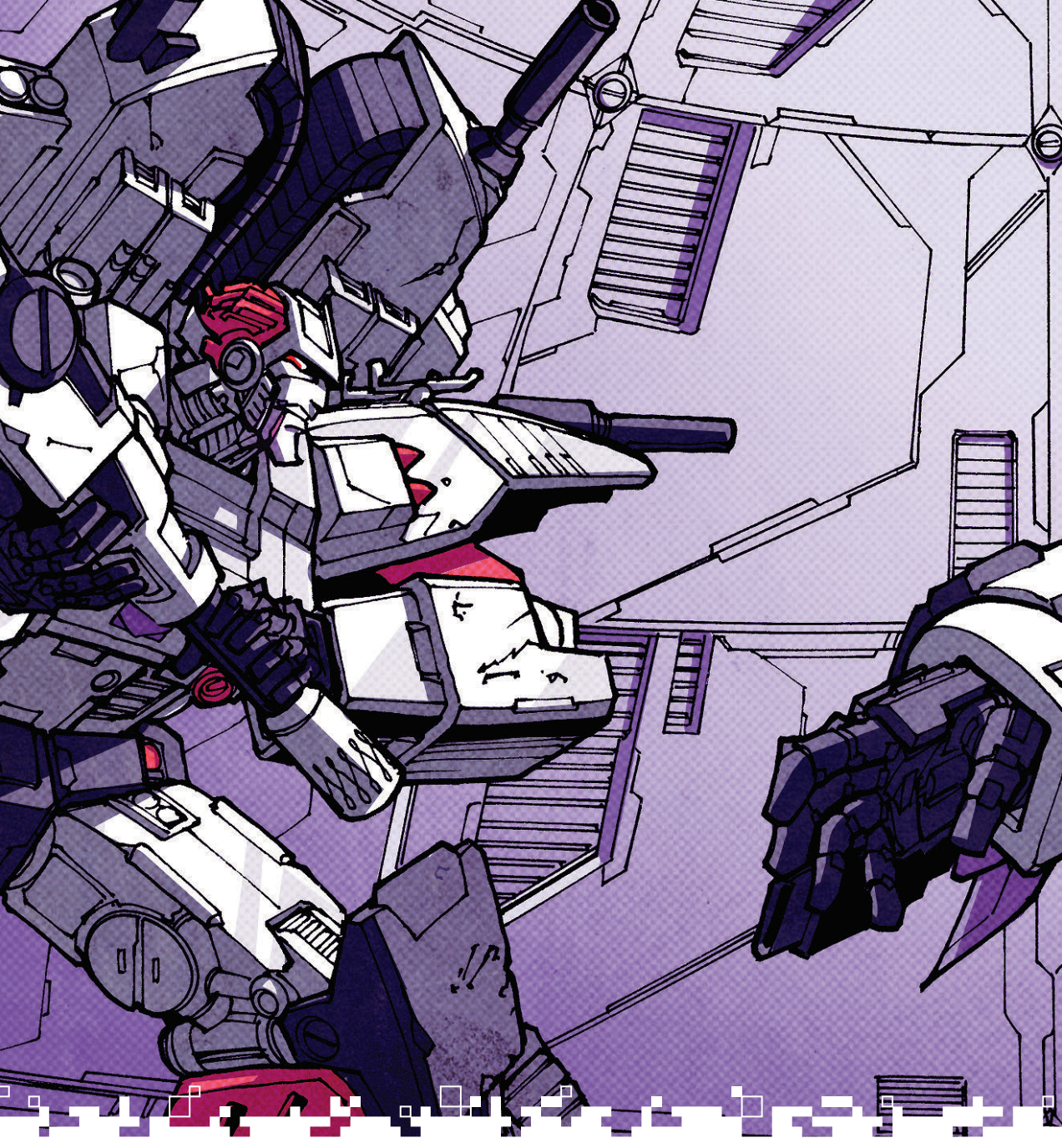

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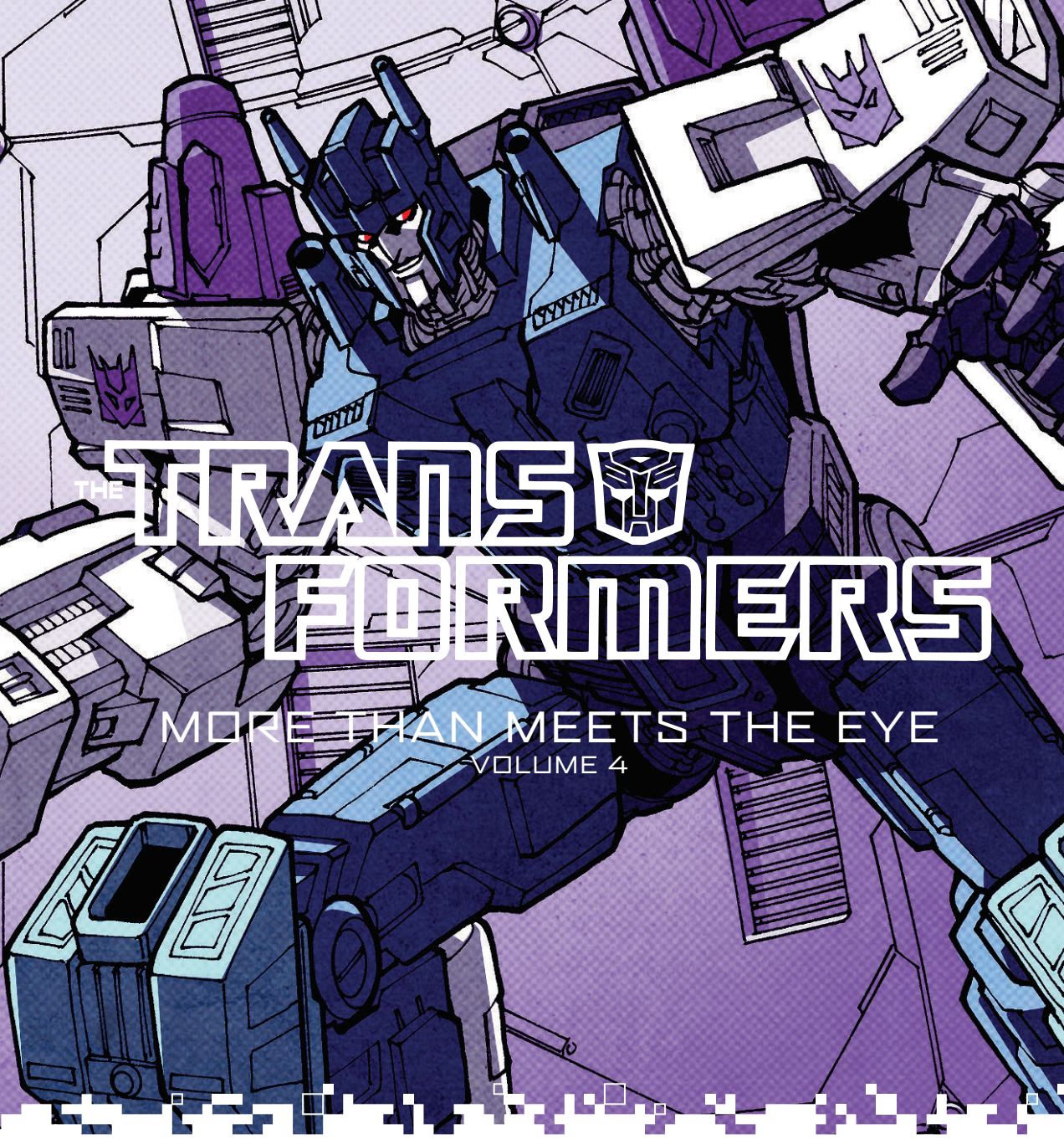


# MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
## VOLUME 4

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LETTERS BY **TOM B. LONG**

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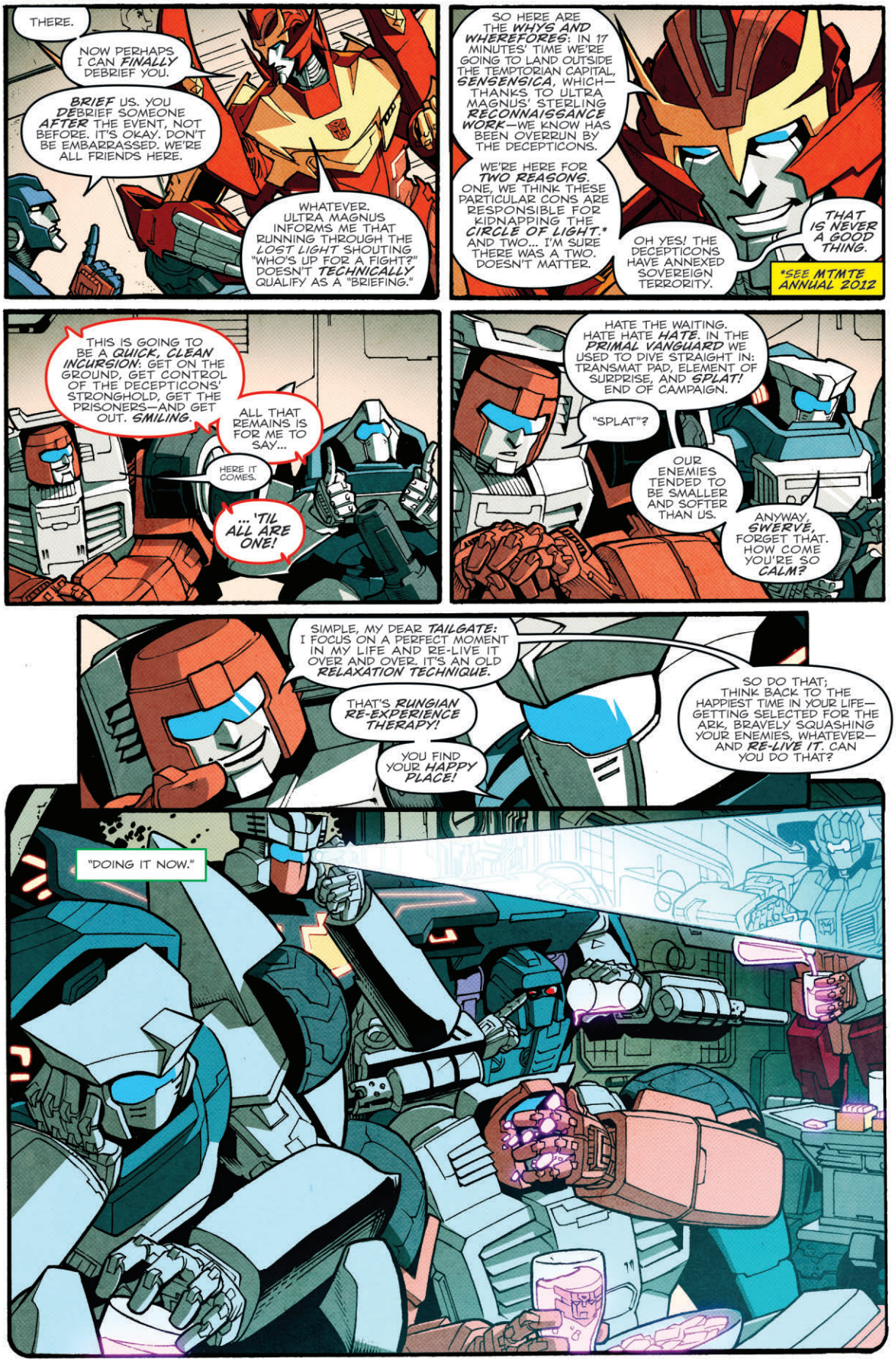
COVER COLORS BY **JOANA LAFUENTE**

☐ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #12 COVER A

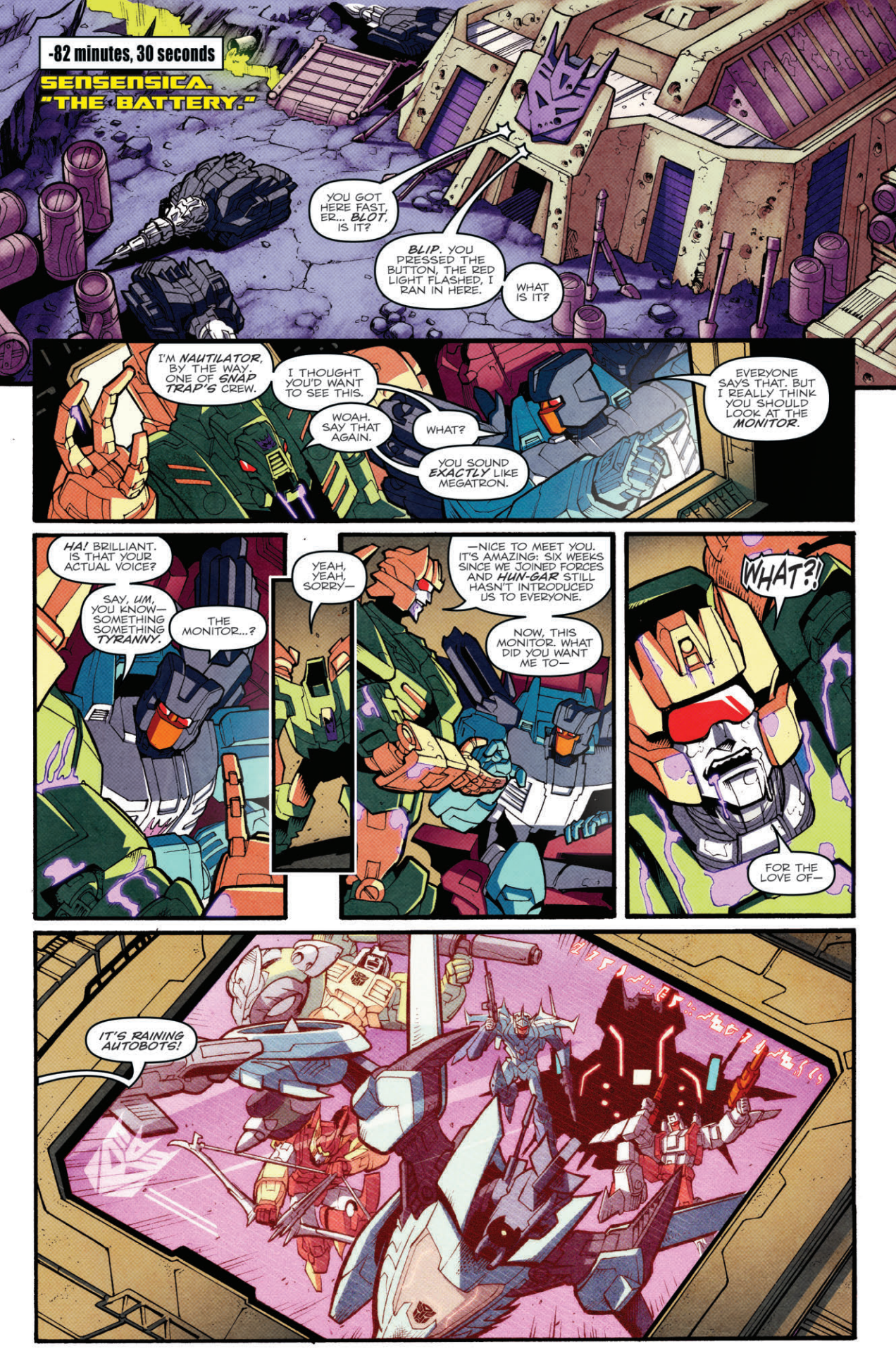
by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

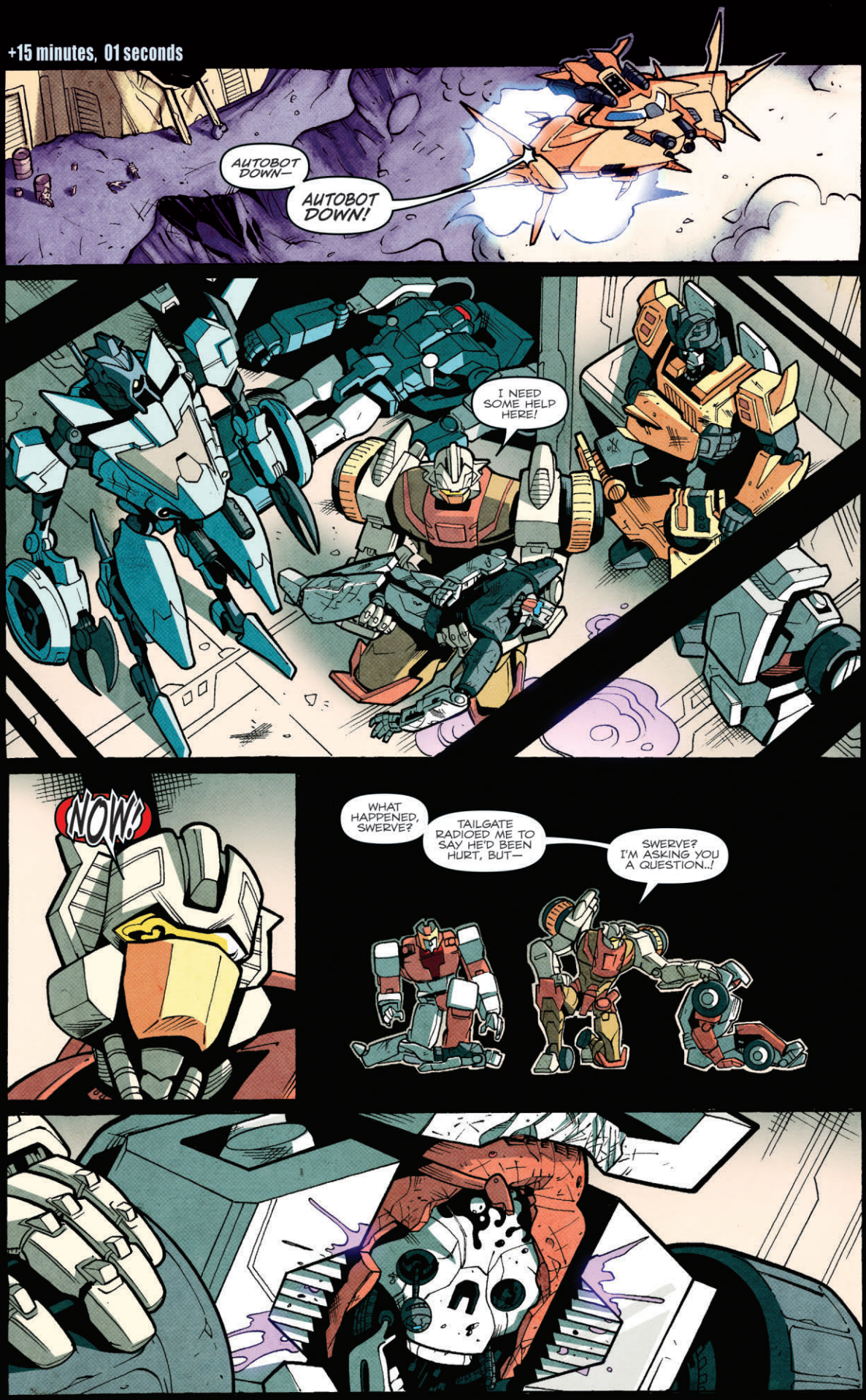
-99 minutes, 24 seconds

BEFORE & AFTER

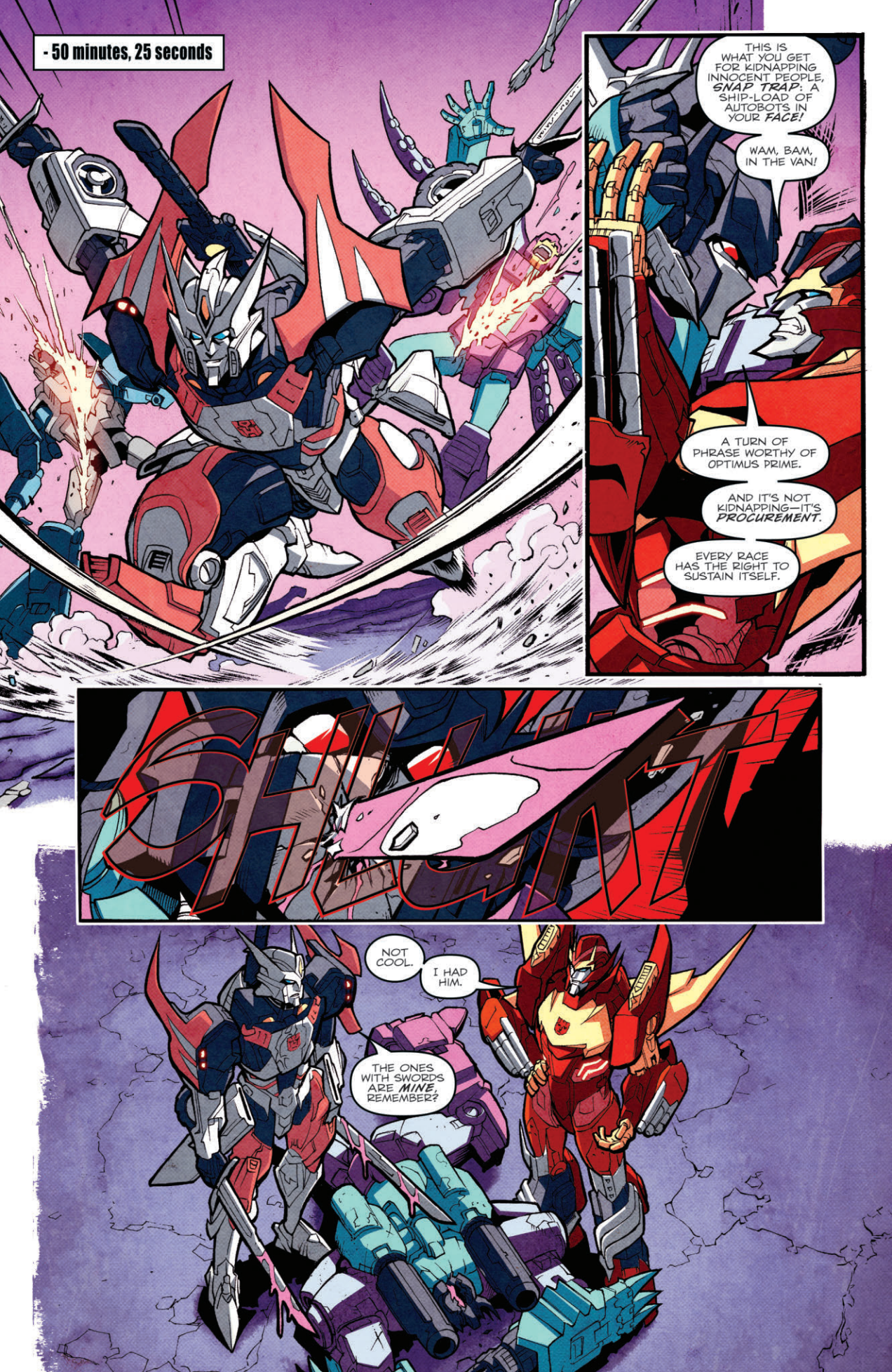

THERE.
NOW PERHAPS I CAN FINALLY DEBRIEF YOU.
BRIEF US. YOU DEBRIEF SOMEONE AFTER THE EVENT, NOT BEFORE. IT'S OKAY. DON'T BE EMBARRASSED. WE'RE ALL FRIENDS HERE.
WHATEVER. ULTRA MAGNUS INFORMS ME THAT RUNNING THROUGH THE LOST LIGHT SHOUTING "WHO'S UP FOR A FIGHT?" DOESN'T TECHNICALLY QUALIFY AS A "BRIEFING."
SO HERE ARE THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES: IN 17 MINUTES' TIME WE'RE GOING TO LAND OUTSIDE THE TEMPTORIAN CAPITAL, SENSENSICA, WHICH—THANKS TO ULTRA MAGNUS' STERLING RECONNAISSANCE WORK—WE KNOW HAS BEEN OVERRUN BY THE DECEPTICONS.
WE'RE HERE FOR TWO REASONS. ONE, WE THINK THESE PARTICULAR CONS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR KIDNAPPING THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT.* AND TWO... I'M SURE THERE WAS A TWO. DOESN'T MATTER.
OH YES! THE DECEPTICONS HAVE ANNEXED SOVEREIGN TERRORITY.
THAT IS NEVER A GOOD THING.
*SEE MTMTE ANNUAL 2012
THIS IS GOING TO BE A QUICK, CLEAN INCURSION: GET ON THE GROUND, GET CONTROL OF THE DECEPTICONS' STRONGHOLD, GET THE PRISONERS—AND GET OUT. SMILING.
ALL THAT REMAINS IS FOR ME TO SAY...
HERE IT COMES.
...'TIL ALL ARE ONE!
HATE THE WAITING. HATE HATE HATE. IN THE PRIMAL VANGUARD WE USED TO DIVE STRAIGHT IN: TRANSMAT PAD, ELEMENT OF SURPRISE, AND SPLAT! END OF CAMPAIGN.
"SPLAT"?
OUR ENEMIES TENDED TO BE SMALLER AND SOFTER THAN US.
ANYWAY, SWERVE, FORGET THAT. HOW COME YOU'RE SO CALM?
SIMPLE, MY DEAR TAILGATE: I FOCUS ON A PERFECT MOMENT IN MY LIFE AND RE-LIVE IT OVER AND OVER. IT'S AN OLD RELAXATION TECHNIQUE.
THAT'S RUNGIAN RE-EXPERIENCE THERAPY!
YOU FIND YOUR HAPPY PLACE!
SO DO THAT; THINK BACK TO THE HAPPIEST TIME IN YOUR LIFE—GETTING SELECTED FOR THE ARK, BRAVELY SQUASHING YOUR ENEMIES, WHATEVER—AND RE-LIVE IT. CAN YOU DO THAT?
"DOING IT NOW."

-91 minutes, 10 seconds
HEAR ABOUT RED ALERT?
UH-HUH. THOSE ENGINE ROOMS ARE CURSED.
ANYONE WHO WALKS PAST THE QUANTUM GENERATORS ENDS UP CRIPPLED OR DEAD.
FAULTY PRESSURE PAD, APPARENTLY— NEARLY TOOK RED'S HEAD OFF.
THEY RECKON HE'LL BE OUT OF ACTION FOR MONTHS. MAGNUS IS TAKING OVER AS DIRECTOR OF SECURITY.
YOU REALIZE THAT MAKES HIM DIRECTOR OF SECURITY AND DULY APPOINTED—
ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE...
...
...TEN, ELEVEN.
YOU REALIZE THAT GIVES HIM THE LONGEST JOB TITLE EVER.
NICE.
HM?
THE LEGS.
HEH.
BRAINSTORM?
UH-HUH.
NICE.
AT LEAST SHOUT AT ME, OR SOMETHING! I'D RATHER YOU SHOUT AT ME THAN THIS: THE CHROMEDOME SILENT TREATMENT.
YOU PROMISED ME, REWIND.
OH, LIKE YOUR PROMISE TO GIVE UP INJECTING? AND IF YOU DARE SAY "THAT'S DIFFERENT," I SWEAR I'LL—
IT IS DIFFERENT! IT IS!
TIME TO WEAPON UP, WALLFLOWERS!
REWIND! YOU'RE WANTED UP FRONT!
...?
BY ME!
I WANT YOU TO TAKE SOME FOOTAGE OF ME LIMBERING UP BEFORE I LAND ON FOREIGN SOIL AND START KILLING FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
IT'S FOR MY BIOPIC: HARDER, FASTER, WRECKER.
CHROMEDOME?
DON'T LET ME STOP YOU.


-82 minutes, 30 seconds
SENSENSICA.
"THE BATTERY."
YOU GOT HERE FAST, ER... BLOT, IS IT?
BLIP. YOU PRESSED THE BUTTON, THE RED LIGHT FLASHED, I RAN IN HERE.
WHAT IS IT?
I'M NAUTILATOR, BY THE WAY. ONE OF SNAP TRAP'S CREW.
I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO SEE THIS.
WOAH. SAY THAT AGAIN.
WHAT?
YOU SOUND EXACTLY LIKE MEGATRON.
EVERYONE SAYS THAT. BUT I REALLY THINK YOU SHOULD LOOK AT THE MONITOR.
HA! BRILLIANT. IS THAT YOUR ACTUAL VOICE?
SAY, UM, YOU KNOW— SOMETHING SOMETHING TYRANNY.
THE MONITOR...?
YEAH, YEAH, SORRY—
—NICE TO MEET YOU. IT'S AMAZING: SIX WEEKS SINCE WE JOINED FORCES AND HUN-GAR STILL HASN'T INTRODUCED US TO EVERYONE.
NOW, THIS MONITOR. WHAT DID YOU WANT ME TO—
WHAT?!
FOR THE LOVE OF—
IT'S RAINING AUTOBOTS!

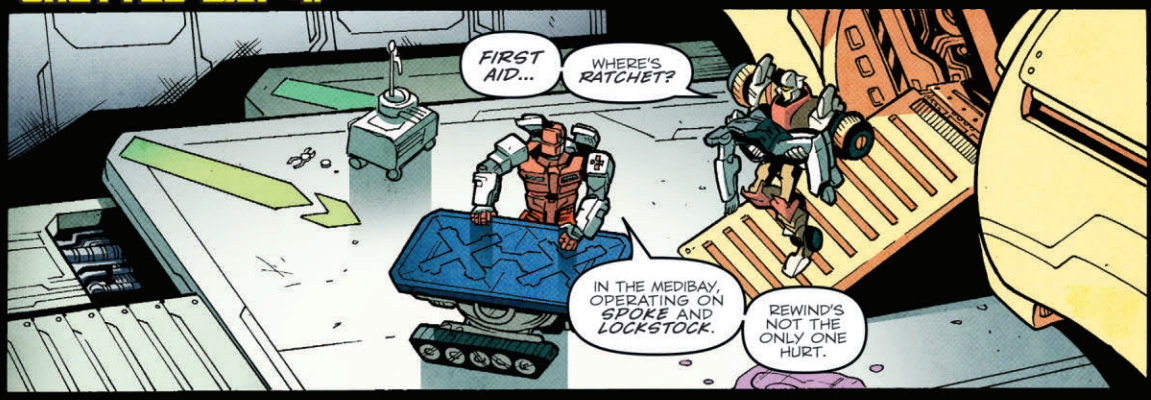

+15 minutes, 01 seconds
AUTOBOT DOWN—
AUTOBOT DOWN!
I NEED SOME HELP HERE!
NOW!
WHAT HAPPENED, SWERVE?
TAILGATE RADIOED ME TO SAY HE'D BEEN HURT, BUT—
SWERVE? I'M ASKING YOU A QUESTION..!

-70 minutes, 43 seconds
THOUGHTS, TAILGATE?
IT'S A BIT...
IT'S A BIT FULL ON, ISN'T IT?
THAK
BLAM
C'MON—WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SNEAKING INTO THEIR BASE...
YOU KNOW YOU SAID ULTRA MAGNUS WAS REALLY GOOD AT FIGHTING...
NOT MY EXACT WORDS, BUT YES?
HE IS REALLY GOOD AT FIGHTING.


- 50 minutes, 25 seconds
THIS IS WHAT YOU GET FOR KIDNAPPING INNOCENT PEOPLE, SNAP TRAP: A SHIP-LOAD OF AUTOBOTS IN YOUR FACE!
WAM, BAM, IN THE VAN!
A TURN OF PHRASE WORTHY OF OPTIMUS PRIME.
AND IT'S NOT KIDNAPPING—IT'S PROCUREMENT.
EVERY RACE HAS THE RIGHT TO SUSTAIN ITSELF.
SHANK
NOT COOL.
I HAD HIM.
THE ONES WITH SWORDS ARE MINE, REMEMBER?

+35 minutes, 15 seconds

**THE LOST LIGHT. SHUTTLE BAY 4.**

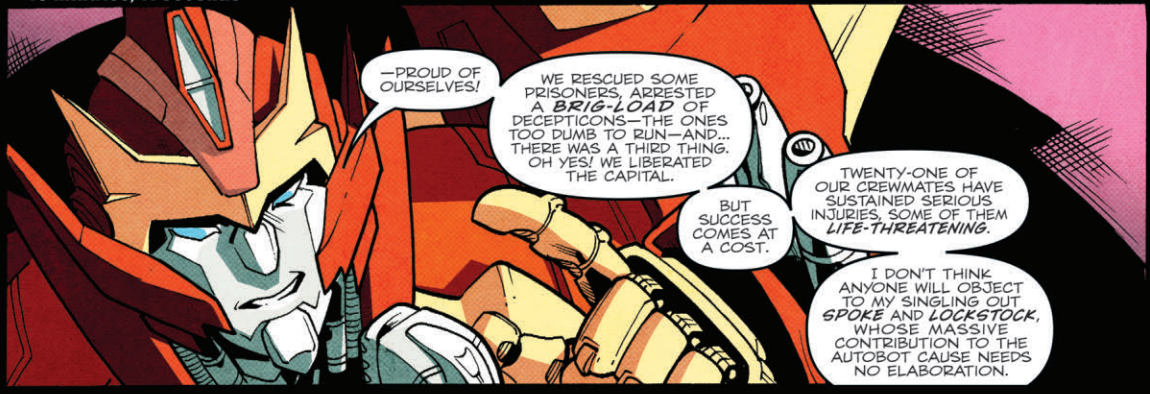



+38 minutes, 43 seconds

**CORRIDOR L5/119**

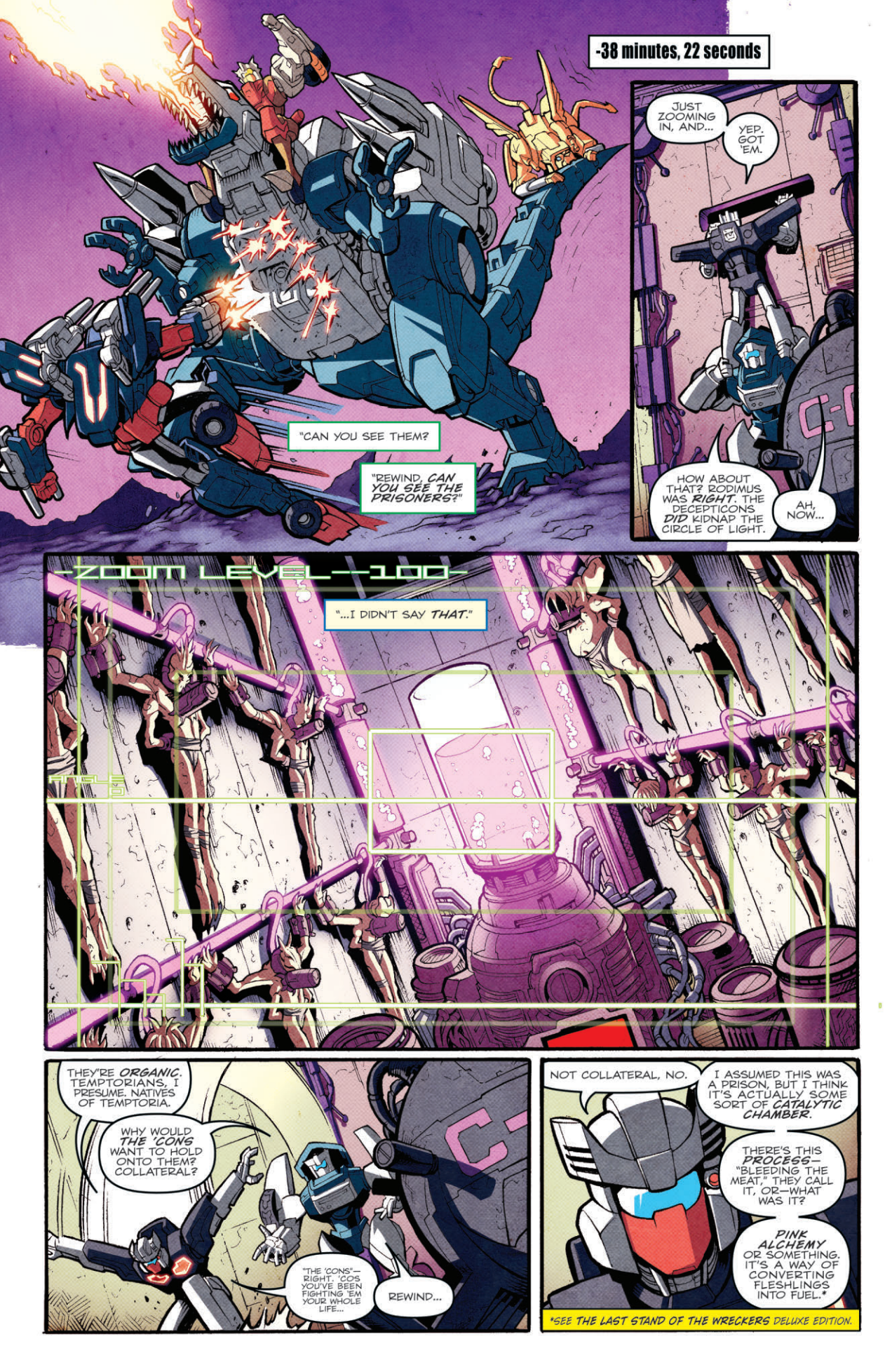
+40 minutes, 34 seconds

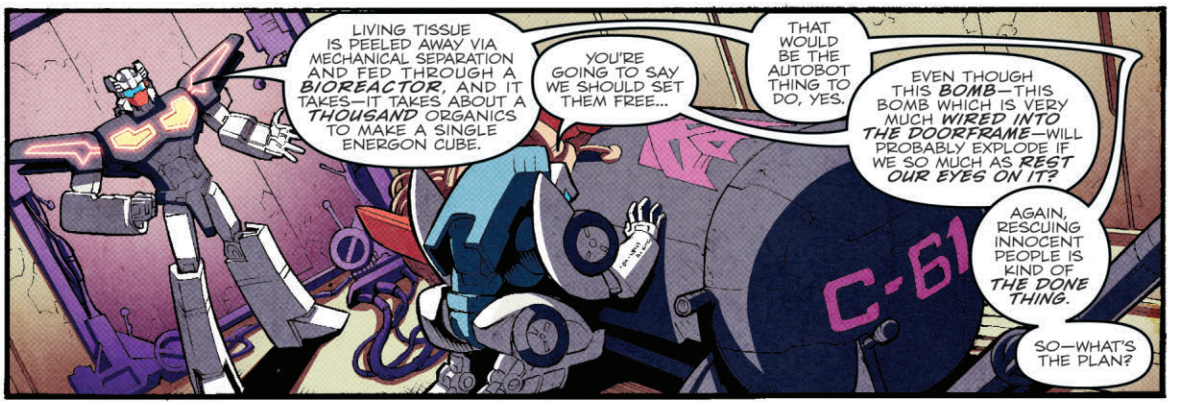
+45 minutes, 11 seconds


—PROUD OF OURSELVES!
WE RESCUED SOME PRISONERS, ARRESTED A BRIG-LOAD OF DECEPTICONS—THE ONES TOO DUMB TO RUN—AND... THERE WAS A THIRD THING. OH YES! WE LIBERATED THE CAPITAL.
BUT SUCCESS COMES AT A COST.
TWENTY-ONE OF OUR CREWMATES HAVE SUSTAINED SERIOUS INJURIES, SOME OF THEM LIFE-THREATENING.
I DON'T THINK ANYONE WILL OBJECT TO MY SINGLING OUT SPOKE AND LOCKSTOCK, WHOSE MASSIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE AUTOBOT CAUSE NEEDS NO ELABORATION.

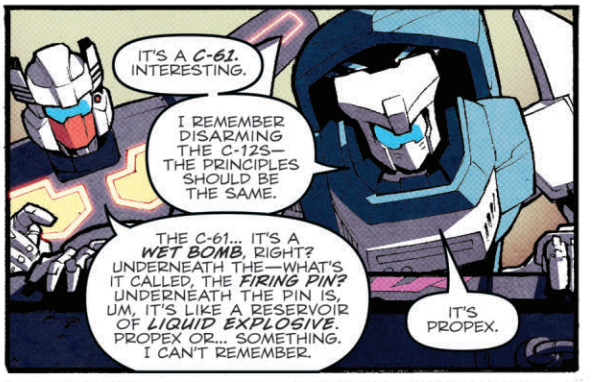
+56 minutes, 50 seconds

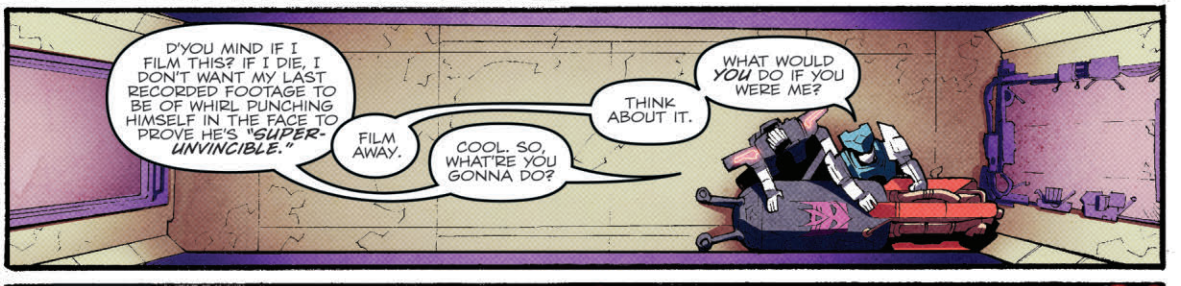
THE MEDIBAY
I'M SORRY THIS FALLS ON YOUR SHOULDERS, CHROMEDOME, BUT REWIND NAMED YOU AS HIS CONJUNX ENDURA—HIS SIGNIFICANT OTHER.
I NEED AN ANSWER.
AND IT'S REALLY AS BAD AS YOU SAY...?
HIS BRAIN'S INTACT, HIS T-COG'S INTACT—BUT HIS SPARK IS SHRINKING BY THE SECOND.
AND—HE'S SMALL.
A BIGGER 'BOT—A MAGNUS—WOULD BOUNCE BACK, BUT REWIND...
SO WE EITHER DO NOTHING IN THE HOPE THAT HE'LL FIND THE STRENGTH TO REIGNITE HIS SPARK...
OR YOU LET ME JUMPSTART HIM, YES.
I'D HOOK HIM UP TO A COMPATIBLE SPARK AND HOPE THE SURGE DOESN'T KILL HIM.
I TRIED IT ON FORTRESS MAXIMUS* AND IT—I MEAN, NO ONE KNEW WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO WHEN HE CAME 'ROUND—BUT IT WORKED.
*ISSUE 4
REC
REWIND'S VITREOUS POSITIVE.
IT'S A RELATIVELY RARE SPARK TYPE. ONE IN 150, ONE IN 200.
I'M V-POSITIVE.
I KNOW.
OKAY THEN.
HOOK US UP.
SOMEBODY...
...PLEASE!
SOMEBODY HELP HIM.

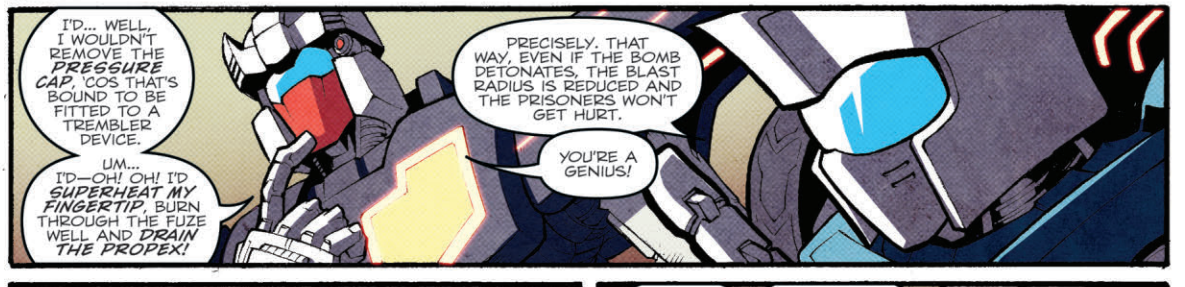

-38 minutes, 22 seconds
"CAN YOU SEE THEM?
"REWIND, CAN YOU SEE THE PRISONERS?"
JUST ZOOMING IN, AND...
YEP. GOT 'EM.
HOW ABOUT THAT? RODIMUS WAS RIGHT. THE DECEPTICONS DID KIDNAP THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT.
AH, NOW...
-ZOOM LEVEL--100-
"...I DIDN'T SAY THAT."
THEY'RE ORGANIC. TEMPTORIANS, I PRESUME. NATIVES OF TEMPTORIA.
WHY WOULD THE 'CONS WANT TO HOLD ONTO THEM? COLLATERAL?
"THE 'CONS"—RIGHT. 'COS YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING 'EM YOUR WHOLE LIFE...
REWIND...
NOT COLLATERAL, NO.
I ASSUMED THIS WAS A PRISON, BUT I THINK IT'S ACTUALLY SOME SORT OF CATALYTIC CHAMBER.
THERE'S THIS PROCESS—"BLEEDING THE MEAT," THEY CALL IT, OR—WHAT WAS IT?
PINK ALCHEMY OR SOMETHING. IT'S A WAY OF CONVERTING FLESHLINGS INTO FUEL.*
*SEE THE LAST STAND OF THE WRECKERS DELUXE EDITION.


LIVING TISSUE IS PEELED AWAY VIA MECHANICAL SEPARATION AND FED THROUGH A BIOREACTOR, AND IT TAKES—IT TAKES ABOUT A THOUSAND ORGANICS TO MAKE A SINGLE ENERGON CUBE.
YOU'RE GOING TO SAY WE SHOULD SET THEM FREE...
THAT WOULD BE THE AUTOBOT THING TO DO, YES.
EVEN THOUGH THIS BOMB—THIS BOMB WHICH IS VERY MUCH WIRED INTO THE DOORFRAME—WILL PROBABLY EXPLODE IF WE SO MUCH AS REST OUR EYES ON IT?
AGAIN, RESCUING INNOCENT PEOPLE IS KIND OF THE DONE THING.
SO—WHAT'S THE PLAN?
C-61

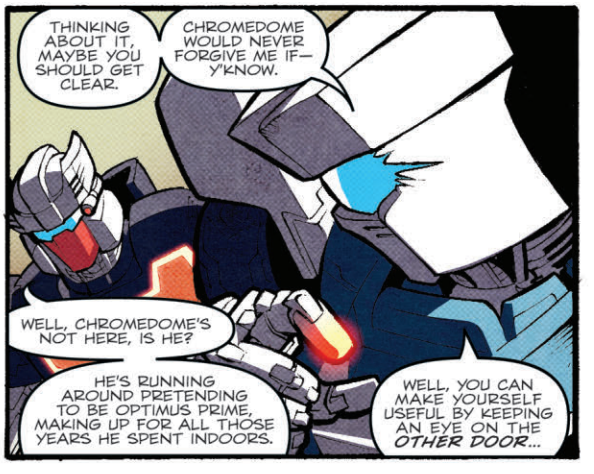
WHAT'S THE PLAN?
THE PLAN, REWIND, IS TO LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS.
BOMB DISPOSAL

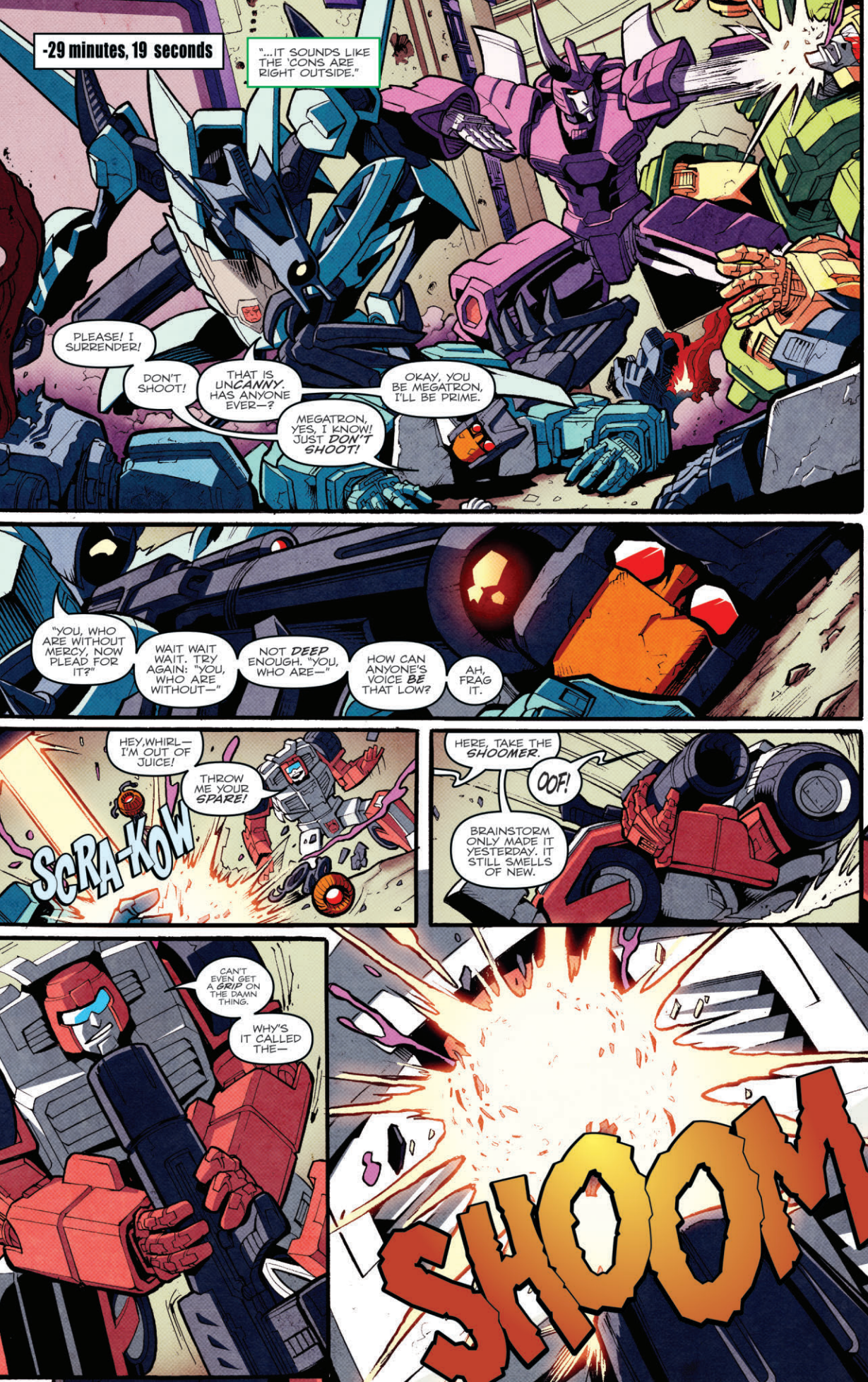

IT'S A C-61. INTERESTING.
I REMEMBER DISARMING THE C-12S—THE PRINCIPLES SHOULD BE THE SAME.
THE C-61... IT'S A WET BOMB, RIGHT? UNDERNEATH THE—WHAT'S IT CALLED, THE FIRING PIN? UNDERNEATH THE PIN IS, UM, IT'S LIKE A RESERVOIR OF LIQUID EXPLOSIVE. PROPEX OR... SOMETHING. I CAN'T REMEMBER.
IT'S PROPEX.

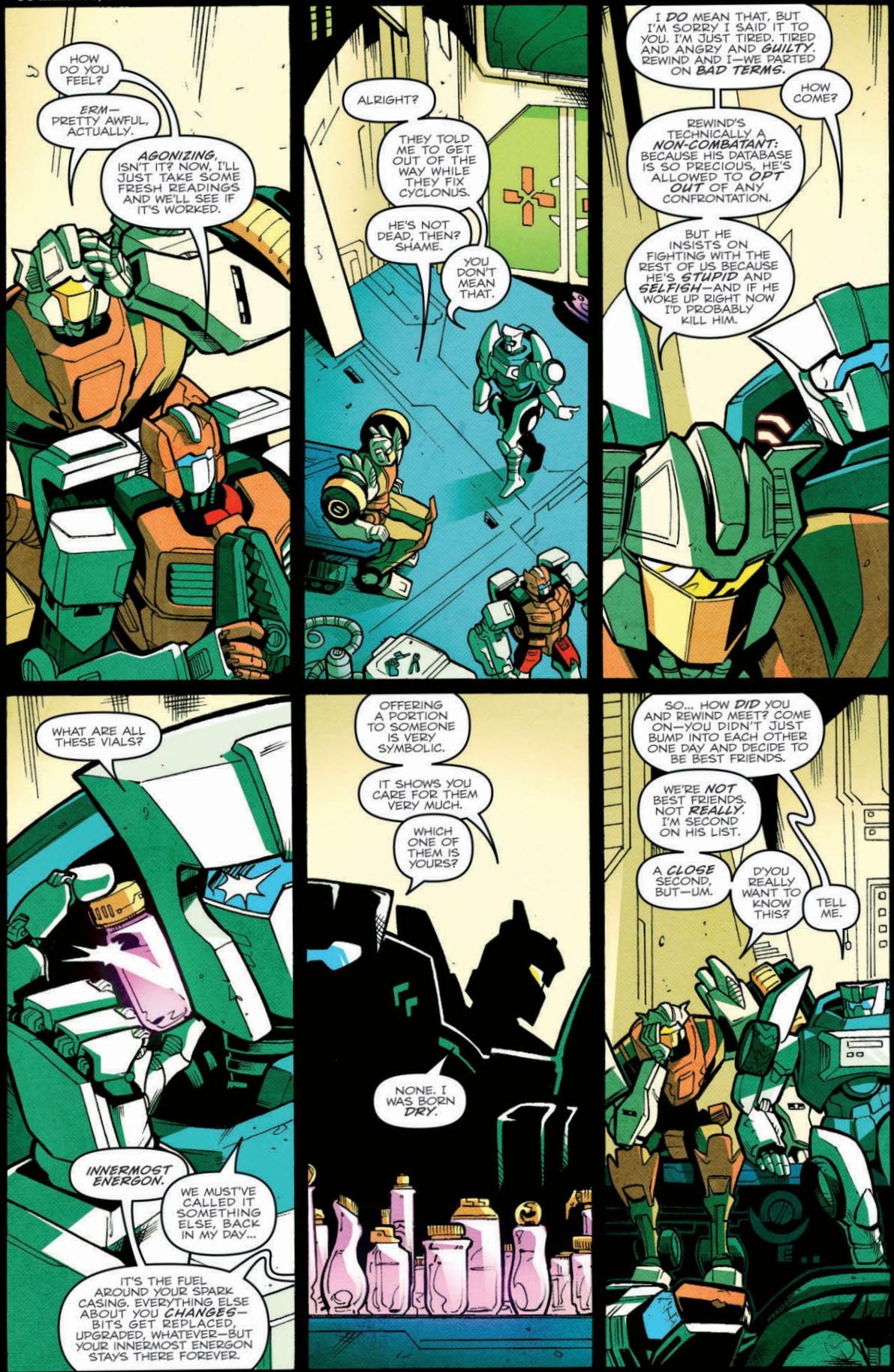

D'YOU MIND IF I FILM THIS? IF I DIE, I DON'T WANT MY LAST RECORDED FOOTAGE TO BE OF WHIRL PUNCHING HIMSELF IN THE FACE TO PROVE HE'S "SUPER-UNVINCIBLE."
FILM AWAY.
COOL. SO, WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO?
THINK ABOUT IT.
WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE ME?

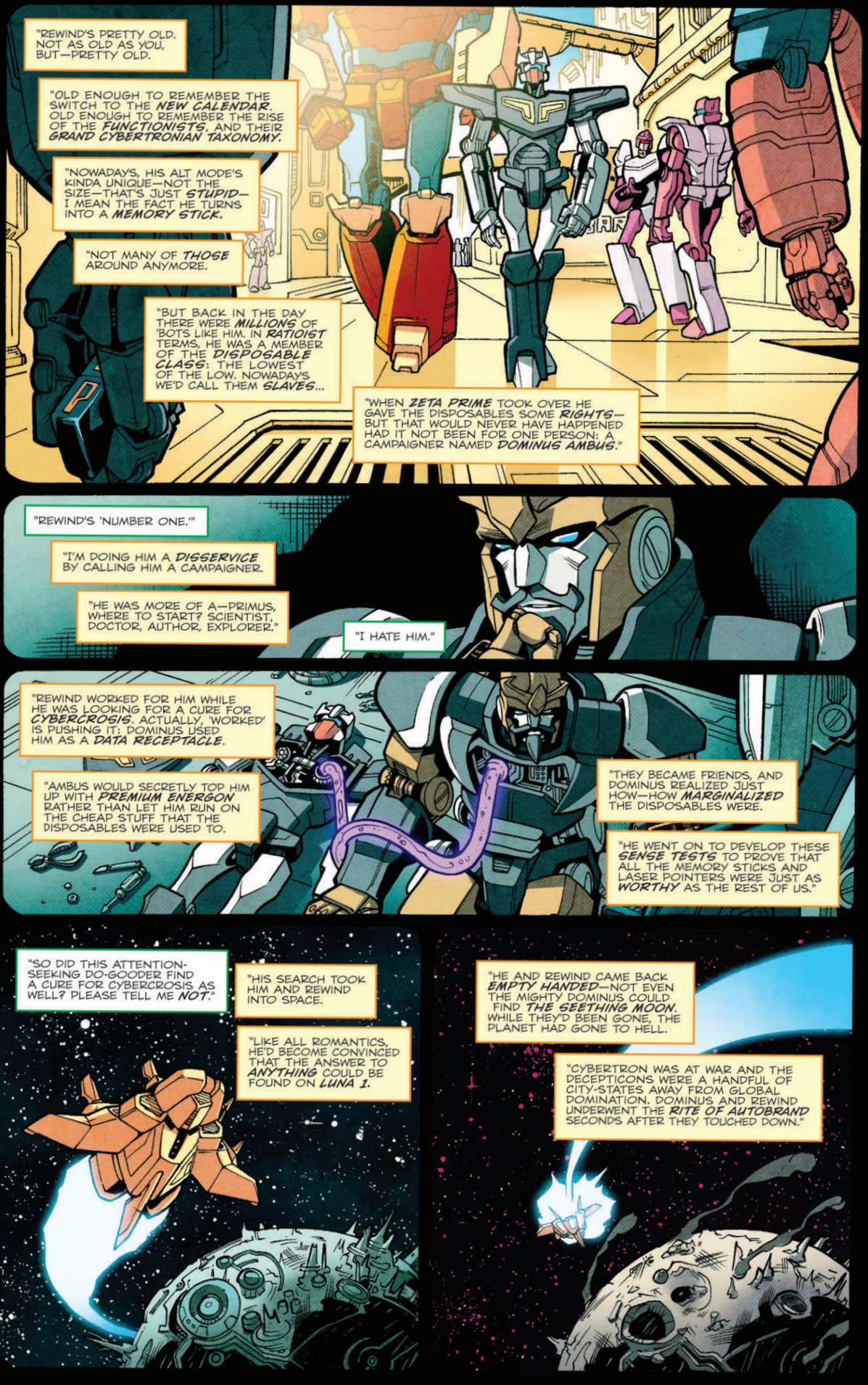

I'D... WELL, I WOULDN'T REMOVE THE PRESSURE CAP, 'COS THAT'S BOUND TO BE FITTED TO A TREMBLER DEVICE.
UM... I'D—OH! OH! I'D SUPERHEAT MY FINGERTIP, BURN THROUGH THE FUZE WELL AND DRAIN THE PROPEX!
PRECISELY. THAT WAY, EVEN IF THE BOMB DETONATES, THE BLAST RADIUS IS REDUCED AND THE PRISONERS WON'T GET HURT.
YOU'RE A GENIUS!

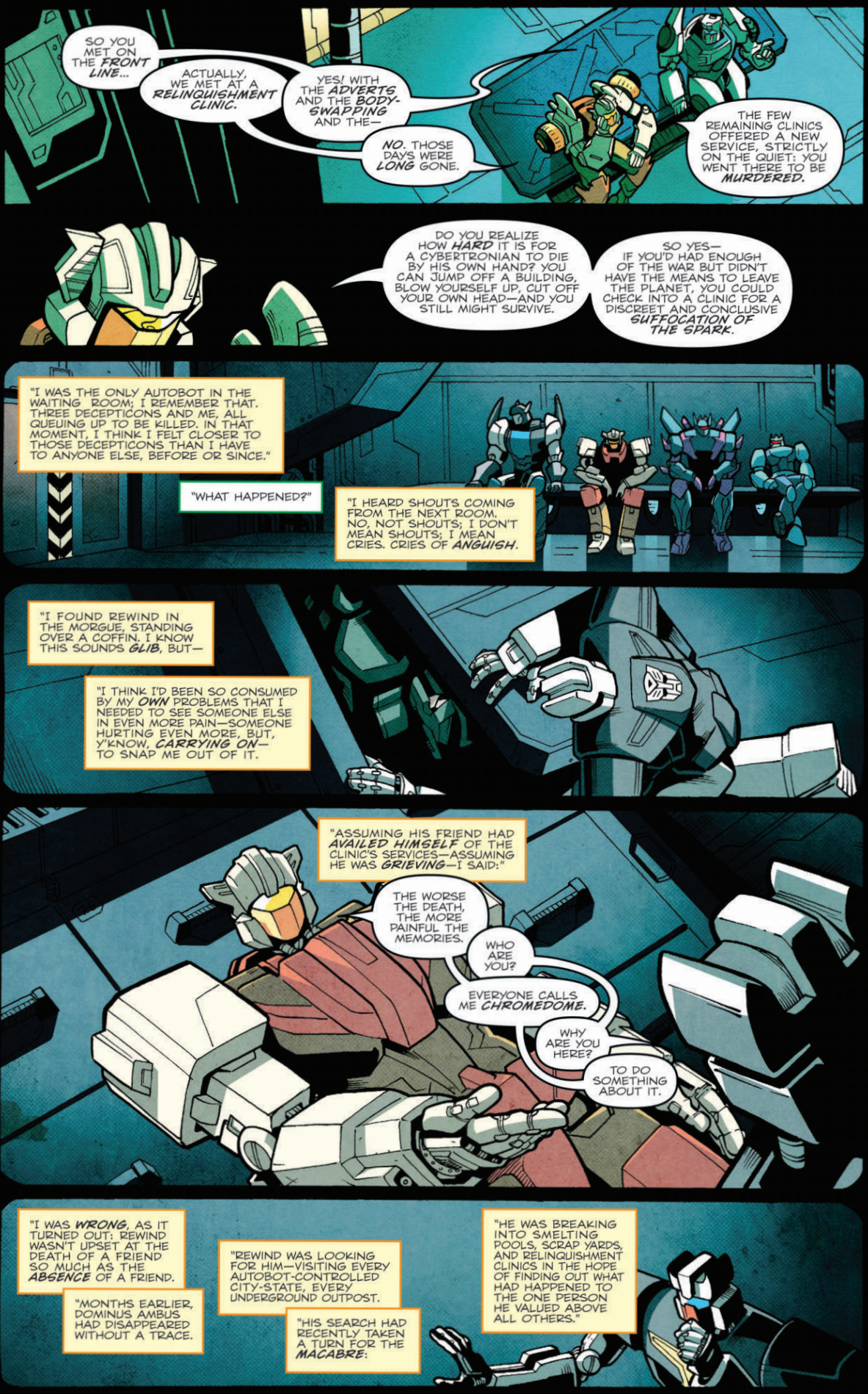
OKAY, SO I'M ABOUT TO COMMENCE THE RENDER SAFE PROCEDURE.
DON'T WORRY. PANIC KEEPS ME FOCUSED.
YOUR EYES...
THE DAY I SNUGGLE UP TO A BOMB AND DON'T FEAR FOR MY LIFE IS THE DAY I GET SLOPPY.
BOMB DISPOSAL


THINKING ABOUT IT, MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET CLEAR.
CHROMEDOME WOULD NEVER FORGIVE ME IF—Y'KNOW.
WELL, CHROMEDOME'S NOT HERE, IS HE?
HE'S RUNNING AROUND PRETENDING TO BE OPTIMUS PRIME, MAKING UP FOR ALL THOSE YEARS HE SPENT INDOORS.
WELL, YOU CAN MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL BY KEEPING AN EYE ON THE OTHER DOOR...


-29 minutes, 19 seconds
"...IT SOUNDS LIKE THE 'CONS ARE RIGHT OUTSIDE."
PLEASE! I SURRENDER!
DON'T SHOOT!
THAT IS UNCANNY. HAS ANYONE EVER—?
MEGATRON, YES, I KNOW! JUST DON'T SHOOT!
OKAY, YOU BE MEGATRON, I'LL BE PRIME.
"YOU, WHO ARE WITHOUT MERCY, NOW PLEAD FOR IT?"
WAIT WAIT WAIT. TRY AGAIN: "YOU, WHO ARE WITHOUT—"
NOT DEEP ENOUGH. "YOU, WHO ARE—"
HOW CAN ANYONE'S VOICE BE THAT LOW?
AH, FRAG IT.
HEY,WHIRL— I'M OUT OF JUICE!
THROW ME YOUR SPARE!
SCRA-KOW
HERE, TAKE THE SHOOMER.
OOF!
BRAINSTORM ONLY MADE IT YESTERDAY. IT STILL SMELLS OF NEW.
CAN'T EVEN GET A GRIP ON THE DAMN THING.
WHY'S IT CALLED THE—
SHOOM

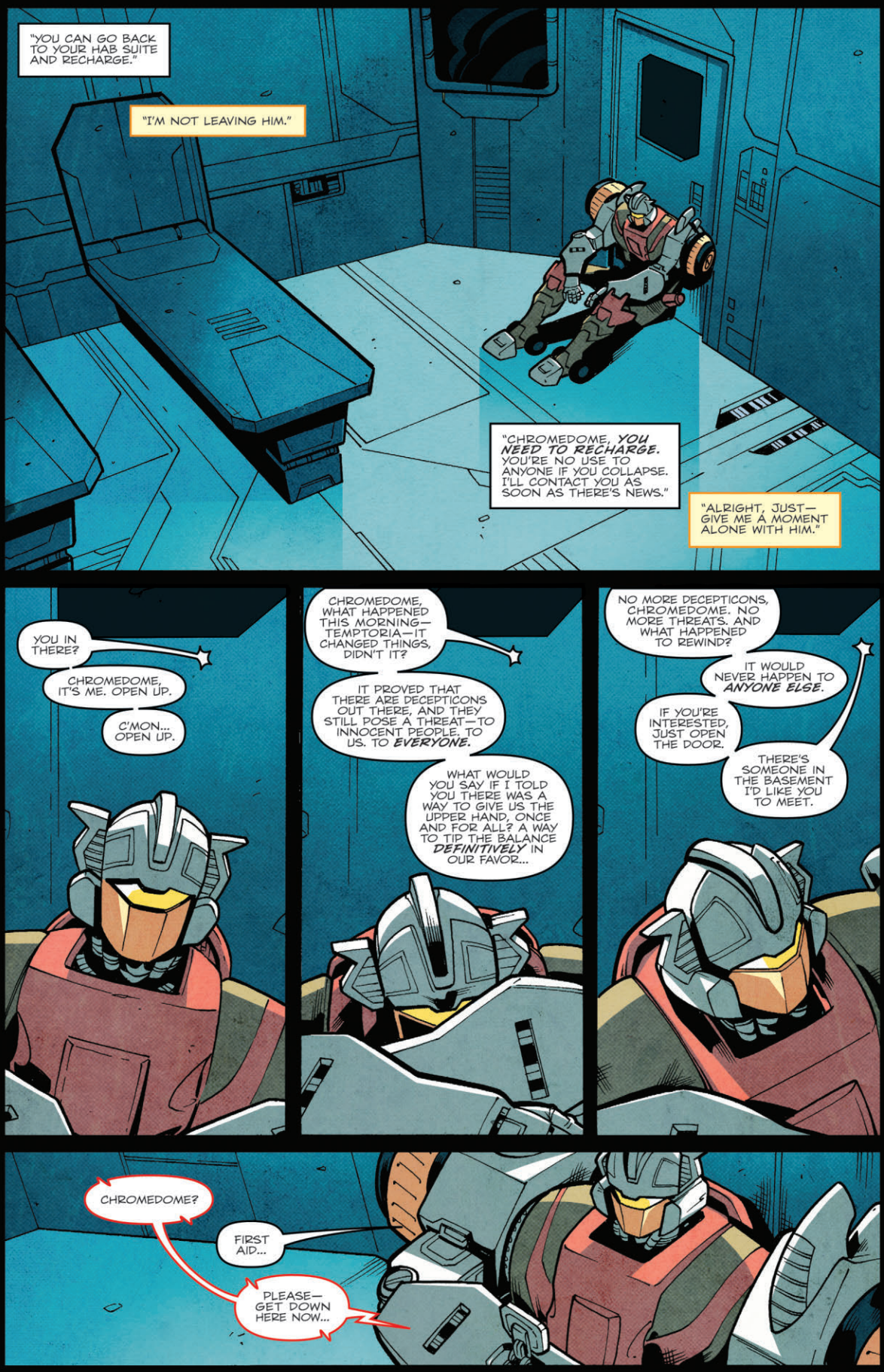

HOW DO YOU FEEL?
ERM— PRETTY AWFUL, ACTUALLY.
AGONIZING, ISN'T IT? NOW, I'LL JUST TAKE SOME FRESH READINGS AND WE'LL SEE IF IT'S WORKED.
ALRIGHT?
THEY TOLD ME TO GET OUT OF THE WAY WHILE THEY FIX CYCLONUS.
HE'S NOT DEAD, THEN? SHAME.
YOU DON'T MEAN THAT.
I DO MEAN THAT, BUT I'M SORRY I SAID IT TO YOU. I'M JUST TIRED. TIRED AND ANGRY AND GUILTY. REWIND AND I—WE PARTED ON BAD TERMS.
HOW COME?
REWIND'S TECHNICALLY A NON-COMBATANT: BECAUSE HIS DATABASE IS SO PRECIOUS, HE'S ALLOWED TO OPT OUT OF ANY CONFRONTATION.
BUT HE INSISTS ON FIGHTING WITH THE REST OF US BECAUSE HE'S STUPID AND SELFISH—AND IF HE WOKE UP RIGHT NOW I'D PROBABLY KILL HIM.
WHAT ARE ALL THESE VIALS?
INNERMOST ENERGON.
WE MUST'VE CALLED IT SOMETHING ELSE, BACK IN MY DAY...
IT'S THE FUEL AROUND YOUR SPARK CASING. EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT YOU CHANGES— BITS GET REPLACED, UPGRADED, WHATEVER—BUT YOUR INNERMOST ENERGON STAYS THERE FOREVER.
OFFERING A PORTION TO SOMEONE IS VERY SYMBOLIC.
IT SHOWS YOU CARE FOR THEM VERY MUCH.
WHICH ONE OF THEM IS YOURS?
NONE. I WAS BORN DRY.
SO... HOW DID YOU AND REWIND MEET? COME ON—YOU DIDN'T JUST BUMP INTO EACH OTHER ONE DAY AND DECIDE TO BE BEST FRIENDS.
WE'RE NOT BEST FRIENDS. NOT REALLY. I'M SECOND ON HIS LIST.
A CLOSE SECOND, BUT—UM.
D'YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW THIS?
TELL ME.

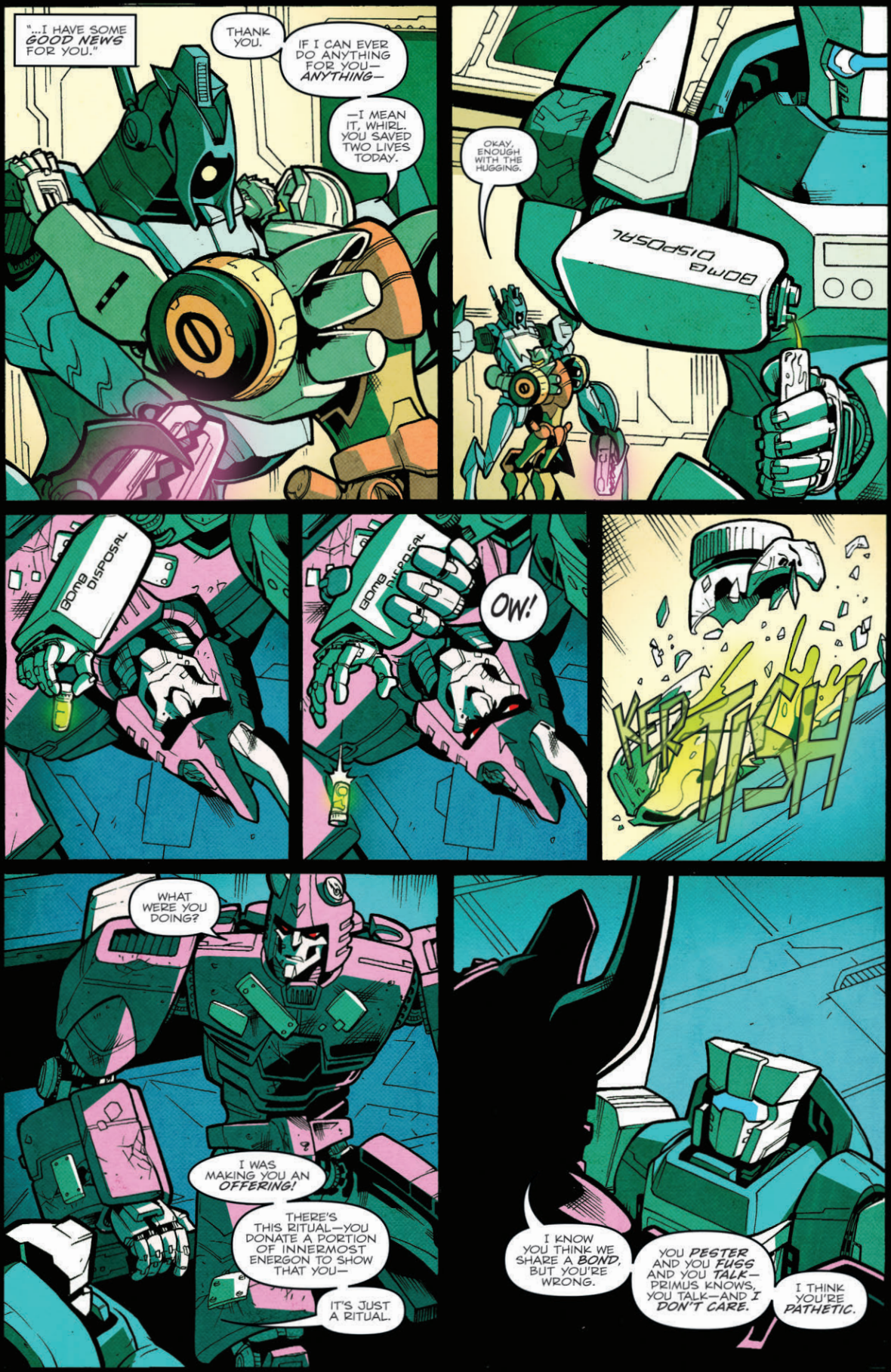

"REWIND'S PRETTY OLD. NOT AS OLD AS YOU, BUT—PRETTY OLD.
"OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE SWITCH TO THE NEW CALENDAR. OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE RISE OF THE FUNCTIONISTS, AND THEIR GRAND CYBERTRONIAN TAXONOMY.
"NOWADAYS, HIS ALT MODE'S KINDA UNIQUE—NOT THE SIZE—THAT'S JUST STUPID—I MEAN THE FACT HE TURNS INTO A MEMORY STICK.
"NOT MANY OF THOSE AROUND ANYMORE.
"BUT BACK IN THE DAY THERE WERE MILLIONS OF 'BOTS LIKE HIM. IN RATIOIST TERMS, HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE DISPOSABLE CLASS: THE LOWEST OF THE LOW. NOWADAYS WE'D CALL THEM SLAVES...
"WHEN ZETA PRIME TOOK OVER HE GAVE THE DISPOSABLES SOME RIGHTS—BUT THAT WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR ONE PERSON: A CAMPAIGNER NAMED DOMINUS AMBUS."
"REWIND'S 'NUMBER ONE.'"
"I'M DOING HIM A DISSERVICE BY CALLING HIM A CAMPAIGNER.
"HE WAS MORE OF A—PRIMUS, WHERE TO START? SCIENTIST, DOCTOR, AUTHOR, EXPLORER."
"I HATE HIM."
"REWIND WORKED FOR HIM WHILE HE WAS LOOKING FOR A CURE FOR CYBERCROSIS. ACTUALLY, 'WORKED' IS PUSHING IT: DOMINUS USED HIM AS A DATA RECEPTACLE.
"AMBUS WOULD SECRETLY TOP HIM UP WITH PREMIUM ENERGON RATHER THAN LET HIM RUN ON THE CHEAP STUFF THAT THE DISPOSABLES WERE USED TO.
"THEY BECAME FRIENDS, AND DOMINUS REALIZED JUST HOW—HOW MARGINALIZED THE DISPOSABLES WERE.
"HE WENT ON TO DEVELOP THESE SENSE TESTS TO PROVE THAT ALL THE MEMORY STICKS AND LASER POINTERS WERE JUST AS WORTHY AS THE REST OF US."
"SO DID THIS ATTENTION-SEEKING DO-GOODER FIND A CURE FOR CYBERCROSIS AS WELL? PLEASE TELL ME NOT."
"HIS SEARCH TOOK HIM AND REWIND INTO SPACE.
"LIKE ALL ROMANTICS, HE'D BECOME CONVINCED THAT THE ANSWER TO ANYTHING COULD BE FOUND ON LUNA 1.
"HE AND REWIND CAME BACK EMPTY HANDED—NOT EVEN THE MIGHTY DOMINUS COULD FIND THE SEETHING MOON. WHILE THEY'D BEEN GONE, THE PLANET HAD GONE TO HELL.
"CYBERTRON WAS AT WAR AND THE DECEPTICONS WERE A HANDFUL OF CITY-STATES AWAY FROM GLOBAL DOMINATION. DOMINUS AND REWIND UNDERWENT THE RITE OF AUTOBRAND SECONDS AFTER THEY TOUCHED DOWN."


SO YOU MET ON THE FRONT LINE...
ACTUALLY, WE MET AT A RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC.
YES! WITH THE ADVERTS AND THE BODY-SWAPPING AND THE—
NO. THOSE DAYS WERE LONG GONE.
THE FEW REMAINING CLINICS OFFERED A NEW SERVICE, STRICTLY ON THE QUIET: YOU WENT THERE TO BE MURDERED.
DO YOU REALIZE HOW HARD IT IS FOR A CYBERTRONIAN TO DIE BY HIS OWN HAND? YOU CAN JUMP OFF A BUILDING, BLOW YOURSELF UP, CUT OFF YOUR OWN HEAD—AND YOU STILL MIGHT SURVIVE.
SO YES— IF YOU'D HAD ENOUGH OF THE WAR BUT DIDN'T HAVE THE MEANS TO LEAVE THE PLANET, YOU COULD CHECK INTO A CLINIC FOR A DISCREET AND CONCLUSIVE SUFFOCATION OF THE SPARK.
"I WAS THE ONLY AUTOBOT IN THE WAITING ROOM; I REMEMBER THAT. THREE DECEPTICONS AND ME, ALL QUEUING UP TO BE KILLED. IN THAT MOMENT, I THINK I FELT CLOSER TO THOSE DECEPTICONS THAN I HAVE TO ANYONE ELSE, BEFORE OR SINCE."
"WHAT HAPPENED?"
"I HEARD SHOUTS COMING FROM THE NEXT ROOM. NO, NOT SHOUTS; I DON'T MEAN SHOUTS; I MEAN CRIES. CRIES OF ANGUISH.
"I FOUND REWIND IN THE MORGUE, STANDING OVER A COFFIN. I KNOW THIS SOUNDS GLIB, BUT—
"I THINK I'D BEEN SO CONSUMED BY MY OWN PROBLEMS THAT I NEEDED TO SEE SOMEONE ELSE IN EVEN MORE PAIN—SOMEONE HURTING EVEN MORE, BUT, Y'KNOW, CARRYING ON— TO SNAP ME OUT OF IT.
"ASSUMING HIS FRIEND HAD AVAILED HIMSELF OF THE CLINIC'S SERVICES—ASSUMING HE WAS GRIEVING—I SAID:"
THE WORSE THE DEATH, THE MORE PAINFUL THE MEMORIES.
WHO ARE YOU?
EVERYONE CALLS ME CHROMEDOME.
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
"I WAS WRONG, AS IT TURNED OUT: REWIND WASN'T UPSET AT THE DEATH OF A FRIEND SO MUCH AS THE ABSENCE OF A FRIEND.
"MONTHS EARLIER, DOMINUS AMBUS HAD DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE.
"REWIND WAS LOOKING FOR HIM—VISITING EVERY AUTOBOT-CONTROLLED CITY-STATE, EVERY UNDERGROUND OUTPOST.
"HIS SEARCH HAD RECENTLY TAKEN A TURN FOR THE MACABRE:
"HE WAS BREAKING INTO SMELTING POOLS, SCRAP YARDS, AND RELINQUISHMENT CLINICS IN THE HOPE OF FINDING OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE ONE PERSON HE VALUED ABOVE ALL OTHERS."

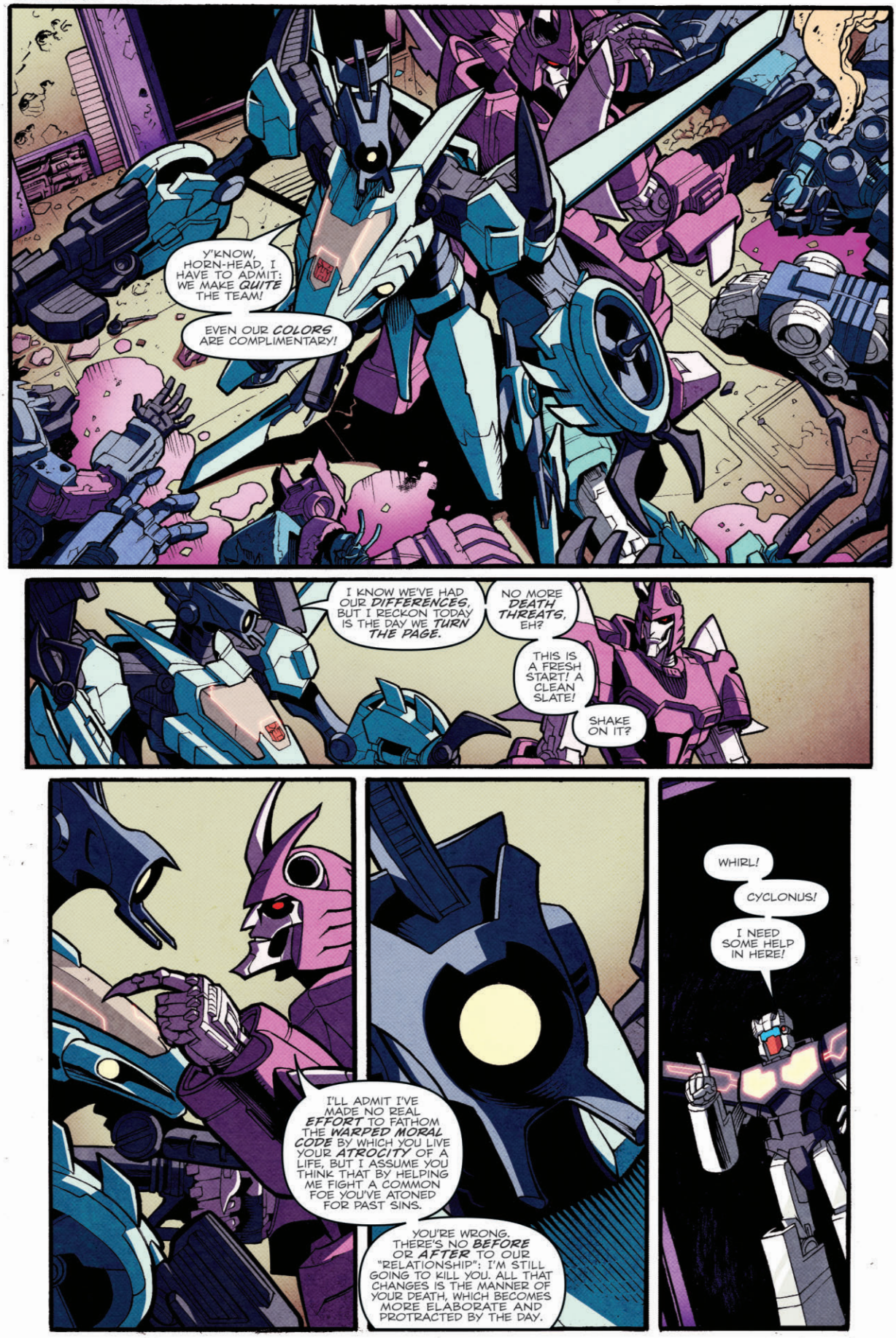
+73 minutes, 44 seconds
AND TO THIS DAY HE'S NOT STOPPED LOOKING.
FORGET THE KNIGHTS; THAT'S THE REAL REASON WE'RE ON THIS QUEST.
SWERVE SAID REWIND WAS BUSTED FOR BRINGING SNUFF MOVIES ON BOARD.
EXECUTIONS AND HOLLOWINGS AND STUFF...
ANYTHING THAT MIGHT SHOW DOMINUS ALIVE OR DEAD. I EVEN— I EVEN PROMISED REWIND I'D CONTINUE THE SEARCH SHOULD ANYTHING HAPPEN TO HIM.
ANYWAY, THAT'S WHY REWIND INSISTS ON FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE REST OF US: HE THINKS THAT WHEREVER THERE ARE CYBERTRONIANS—AUTOBOT OR DECEPTICON—THERE'S A CHANCE OF MEETING DOMINUS.
YOU THINK SO? OR DO YOU THINK HE WANTS TO BE THERE BECAUSE YOU'RE THERE.
HE CAN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF YOU PUTTING YOUR LIFE AT RISK WITHOUT HIM.
AHEM
DID IT WORK?
FIRST AID, DID IT WORK?
BUT YOU SAID WE WERE COMPATIBLE!
YOU ARE.
THEN WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
IT'S YOUR SPARK. IT'S LOW YIELD.
WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN?
IT MEANS IT'S WEAK. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT, OR WHETHER—SOMEHOW—IT'S A BY-PRODUCT OF ALL THE INTERFACING YOU DO— BUT YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO SAVE HIM.
LISTEN... THERE MIGHT BE SOMEONE ELSE WHO CAN JUMPSTART HIM.
IT'S A LONG SHOT— STATISTICALLY— BUT I'LL PUT THE WORD OUT.
WHAT CAN I DO?

+82 minutes, 54 seconds

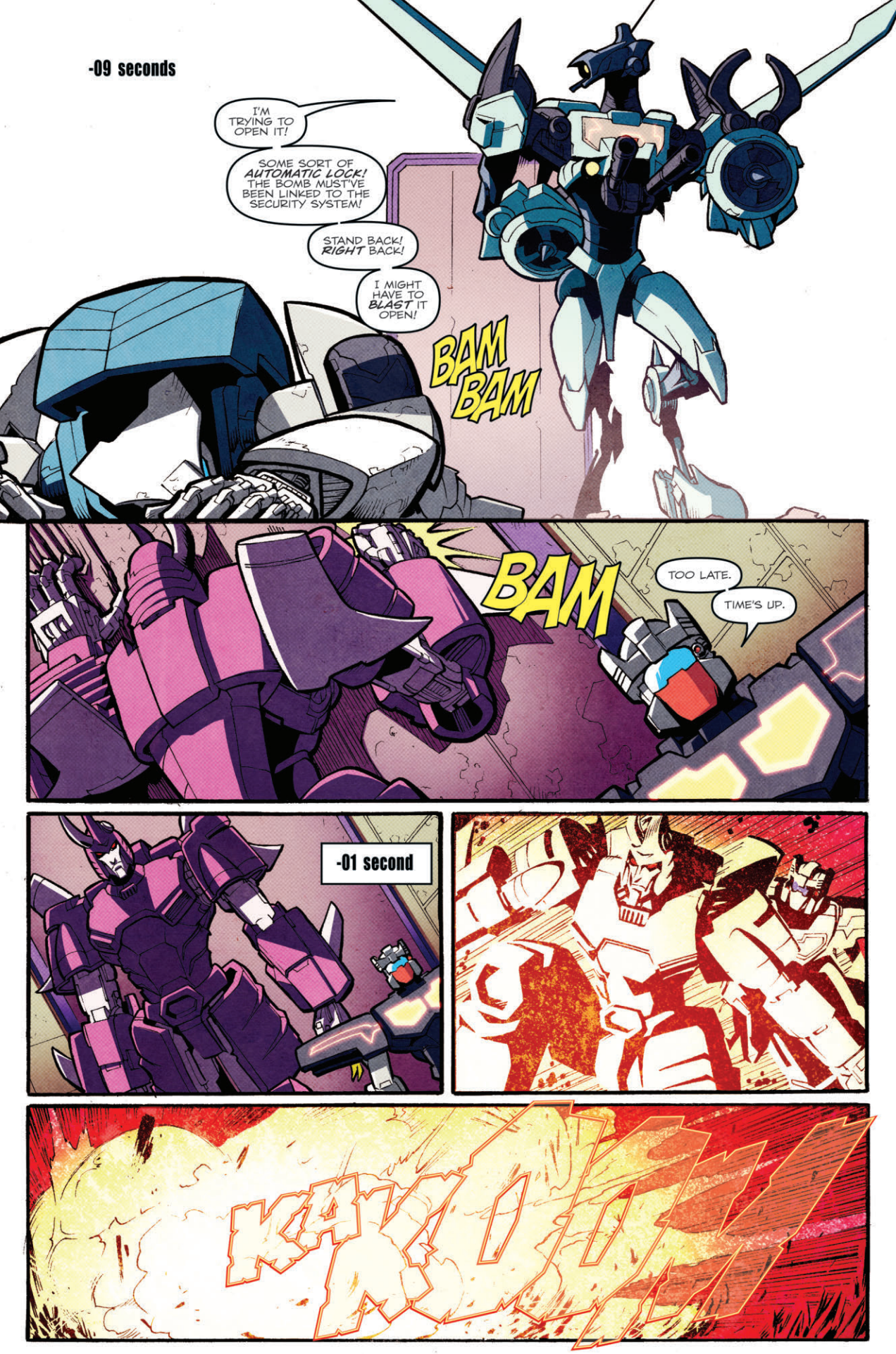

"YOU CAN GO BACK TO YOUR HAB SUITE AND RECHARGE."
"I'M NOT LEAVING HIM."
"CHROMEDOME, YOU NEED TO RECHARGE. YOU'RE NO USE TO ANYONE IF YOU COLLAPSE. I'LL CONTACT YOU AS SOON AS THERE'S NEWS."
"ALRIGHT, JUST— GIVE ME A MOMENT ALONE WITH HIM."
YOU IN THERE?
CHROMEDOME, IT'S ME. OPEN UP.
C'MON... OPEN UP.
CHROMEDOME, WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING— TEMPTORIA—IT CHANGED THINGS, DIDN'T IT?
IT PROVED THAT THERE ARE DECEPTICONS OUT THERE, AND THEY STILL POSE A THREAT—TO INNOCENT PEOPLE. TO US. TO EVERYONE.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU THERE WAS A WAY TO GIVE US THE UPPER HAND, ONCE AND FOR ALL? A WAY TO TIP THE BALANCE DEFINITIVELY IN OUR FAVOR...
NO MORE DECEPTICONS, CHROMEDOME. NO MORE THREATS. AND WHAT HAPPENED TO REWIND?
IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ANYONE ELSE.
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, JUST OPEN THE DOOR.
THERE'S SOMEONE IN THE BASEMENT I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET.
CHROMEDOME?
FIRST AID...
PLEASE— GET DOWN HERE NOW...


"...I HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS FOR YOU."
THANK YOU.
IF I CAN EVER DO ANYTHING FOR YOU—ANYTHING—
—I MEAN IT, WHIRL. YOU SAVED TWO LIVES TODAY.
OKAY, ENOUGH WITH THE HUGGING.
BOMB DISPOSAL
BOMB DISPOSAL
BOMB DISPOSAL
OW!
KER TASH
WHAT WERE YOU DOING?
I WAS MAKING YOU AN OFFERING!
THERE'S THIS RITUAL—YOU DONATE A PORTION OF INNERMOST ENERGON TO SHOW THAT YOU—
IT'S JUST A RITUAL.
I KNOW YOU THINK WE SHARE A BOND, BUT YOU'RE WRONG.
YOU PESTER AND YOU FUSS AND YOU TALK—PRIMUS KNOWS, YOU TALK—AND I DON'T CARE.
I THINK YOU'RE PATHETIC.

-01 minute, 19 seconds


Y'KNOW, HORN-HEAD, I HAVE TO ADMIT: WE MAKE *QUITE* THE TEAM!
EVEN OUR *COLORS* ARE COMPLIMENTARY!
I KNOW WE'VE HAD OUR *DIFFERENCES*, BUT I RECKON TODAY IS THE DAY WE *TURN THE PAGE*.
NO MORE *DEATH THREATS*, EH?
THIS IS A FRESH START! A CLEAN SLATE!
SHAKE ON IT?
I'LL ADMIT I'VE MADE NO REAL *EFFORT* TO FATHOM THE *WARPED MORAL CODE* BY WHICH YOU LIVE YOUR *ATROCITY* OF A LIFE, BUT I ASSUME YOU THINK THAT BY HELPING ME FIGHT A COMMON FOE YOU'VE ATONED FOR PAST SINS.
YOU'RE WRONG. THERE'S NO *BEFORE* OR *AFTER* TO OUR "RELATIONSHIP": I'M STILL GOING TO KILL YOU. ALL THAT CHANGES IS THE MANNER OF YOUR DEATH, WHICH BECOMES MORE ELABORATE AND PROTRACTED BY THE DAY.
WHIRL!
CYCLONUS!
I NEED SOME HELP IN HERE!

- 31 seconds
HE WON'T LISTEN TO ME!
HE'S TRIGGERED SOME SORT OF TIMER— 30 SECONDS AND COUNTING—BUT HE'S TOO STUBBORN TO WALK AWAY!
I CAN'T LEAVE WHEN THERE'S STILL PROPEX INSIDE!
IT'S NEARLY EMPTY! THE BLAST WON'T REACH THE PRISONERS!
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT!
HMFF!
ALLOW ME.
20 SECONDS!
DOOR LOCK
TAK
SEE YA, CYCLONUS.
THE DOOR!
THUNK


-09 seconds
I'M TRYING TO OPEN IT!
SOME SORT OF AUTOMATIC LOCK! THE BOMB MUST'VE BEEN LINKED TO THE SECURITY SYSTEM!
STAND BACK! RIGHT BACK!
I MIGHT HAVE TO BLAST IT OPEN!
BAM BAM
BAM
TOO LATE.
TIME'S UP.
-01 second
KA-KOOM!!

☐ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #12 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #13 COVER A

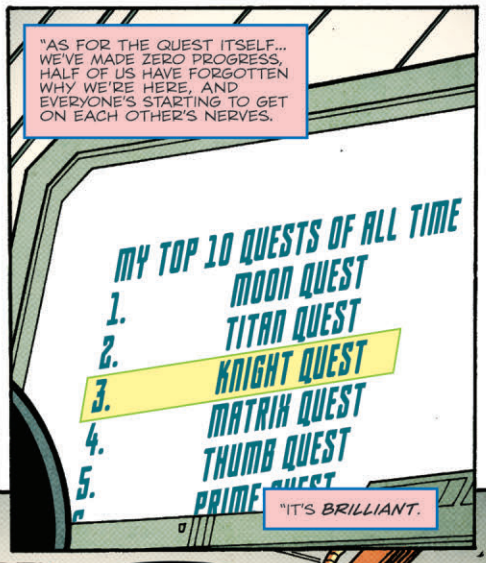
by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

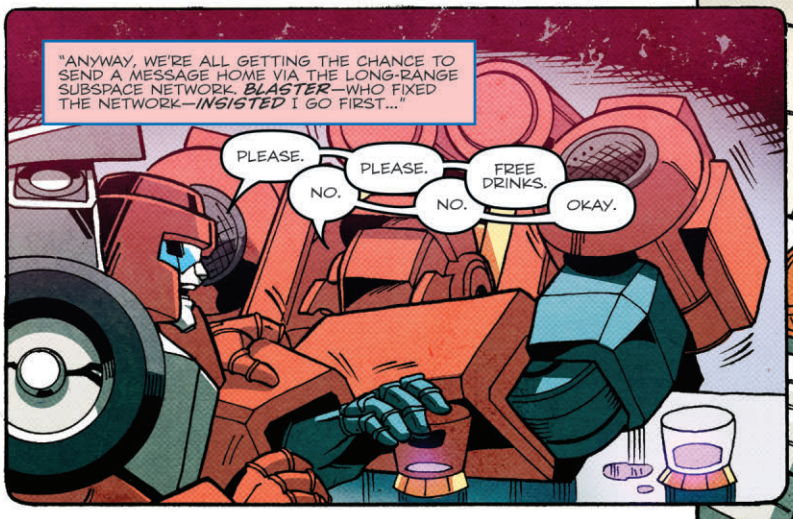
BLURRRRRR!

IT'S ME!
SWERVE! SWERVY! THE SWERVESTER! MOTORMOUTH!
CHINWAGGER! CHATTERBOT! HE-WHO-NEVER-STOPS!

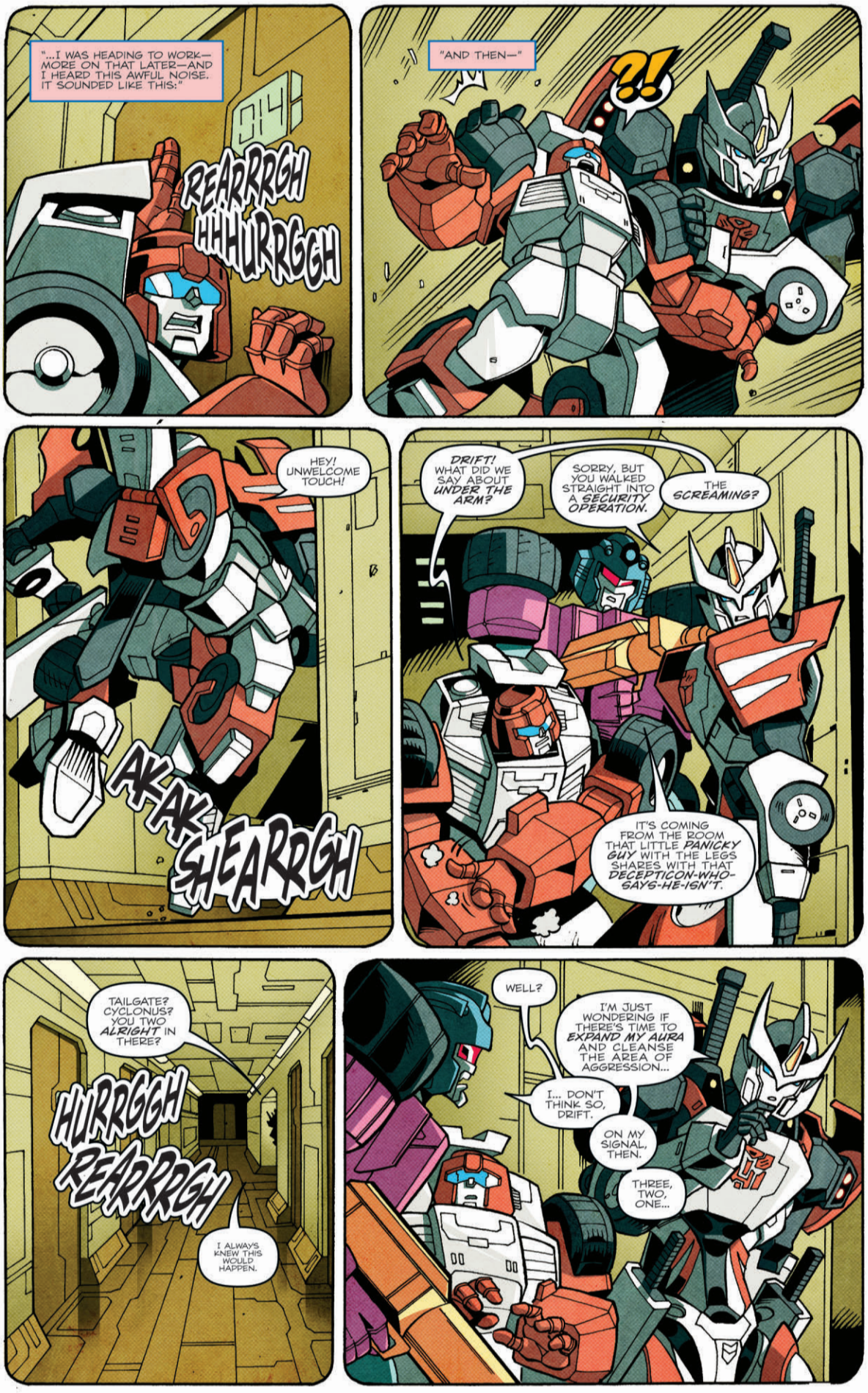
"FIRST OFF, THE GOOD NEWS: WE'RE NOT DEAD!
BOOM
"PERCEPTOR THINKS OUR DEPARTURE MUST'VE LOOKED PRETTY EXPLOSIVE FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, BUT MOURN NO MORE: YOU WERE ACTUALLY WATCHING A QUANTUM SEIZURE.

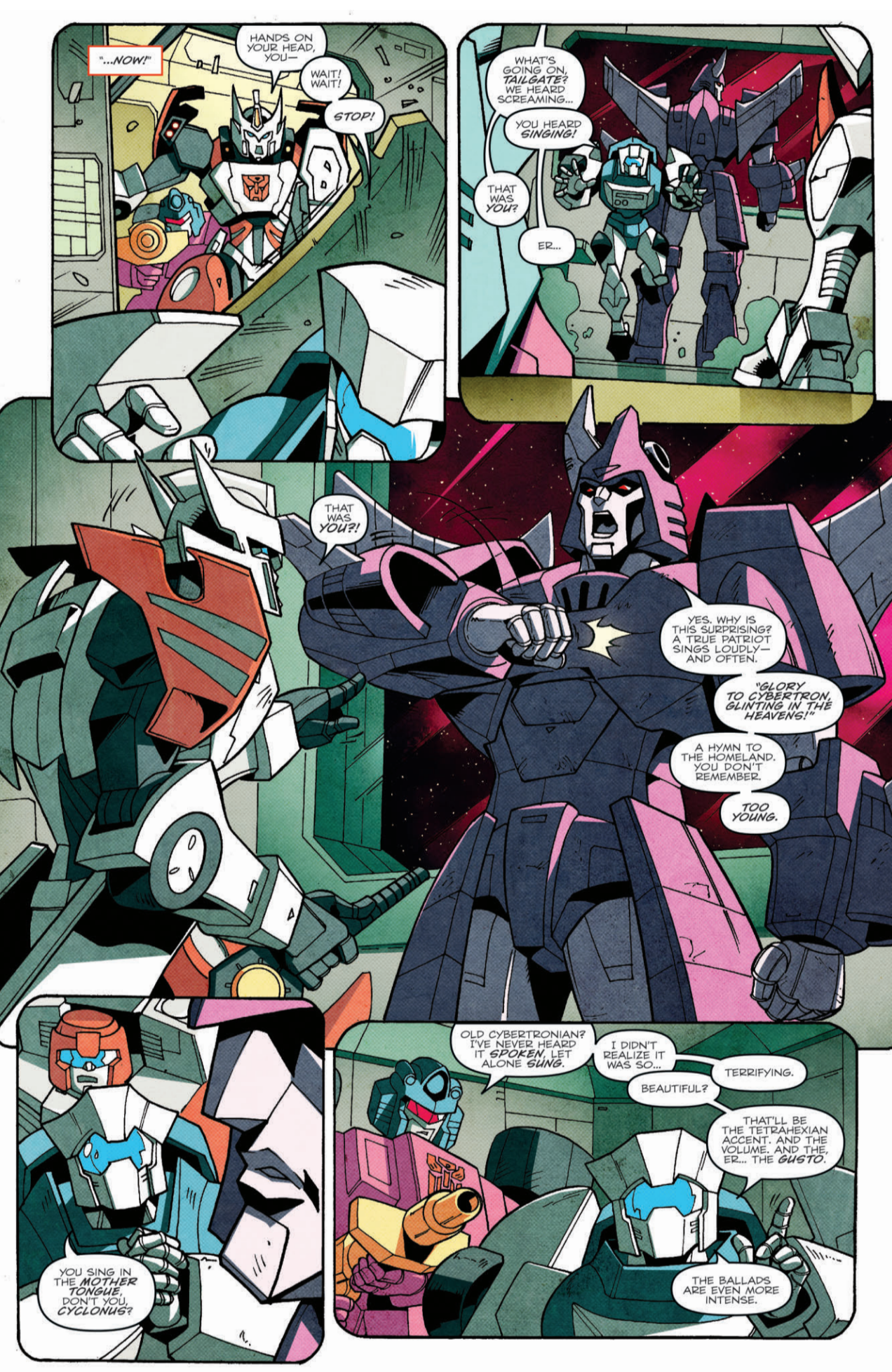
"PERCY TRIED TO EXPLAIN IT TO ME, BUT I THINK HE COULD TELL I WAS LOSING INTEREST."
$L_nW(z)=$
$-z^{n+1}\frac{\partial}{\partial z}W(z)-$
$(n=1)\Delta z^nW(z)$


"AS FOR THE QUEST ITSELF... WE'VE MADE ZERO PROGRESS, HALF OF US HAVE FORGOTTEN WHY WE'RE HERE, AND EVERYONE'S STARTING TO GET ON EACH OTHER'S NERVES.
MY TOP 10 QUESTS OF ALL TIME
1. MOON QUEST
2. TITAN QUEST
3. KNIGHT QUEST
4. MATRIX QUEST
5. THUMB QUEST
"IT'S BRILLIANT.


"ANYWAY, WE'RE ALL GETTING THE CHANCE TO SEND A MESSAGE HOME VIA THE LONG-RANGE SUBSPACE NETWORK. BLASTER—WHO FIXED THE NETWORK—INSISTED I GO FIRST..."
PLEASE.
NO.
PLEASE.
NO.
FREE DRINKS.
OKAY.

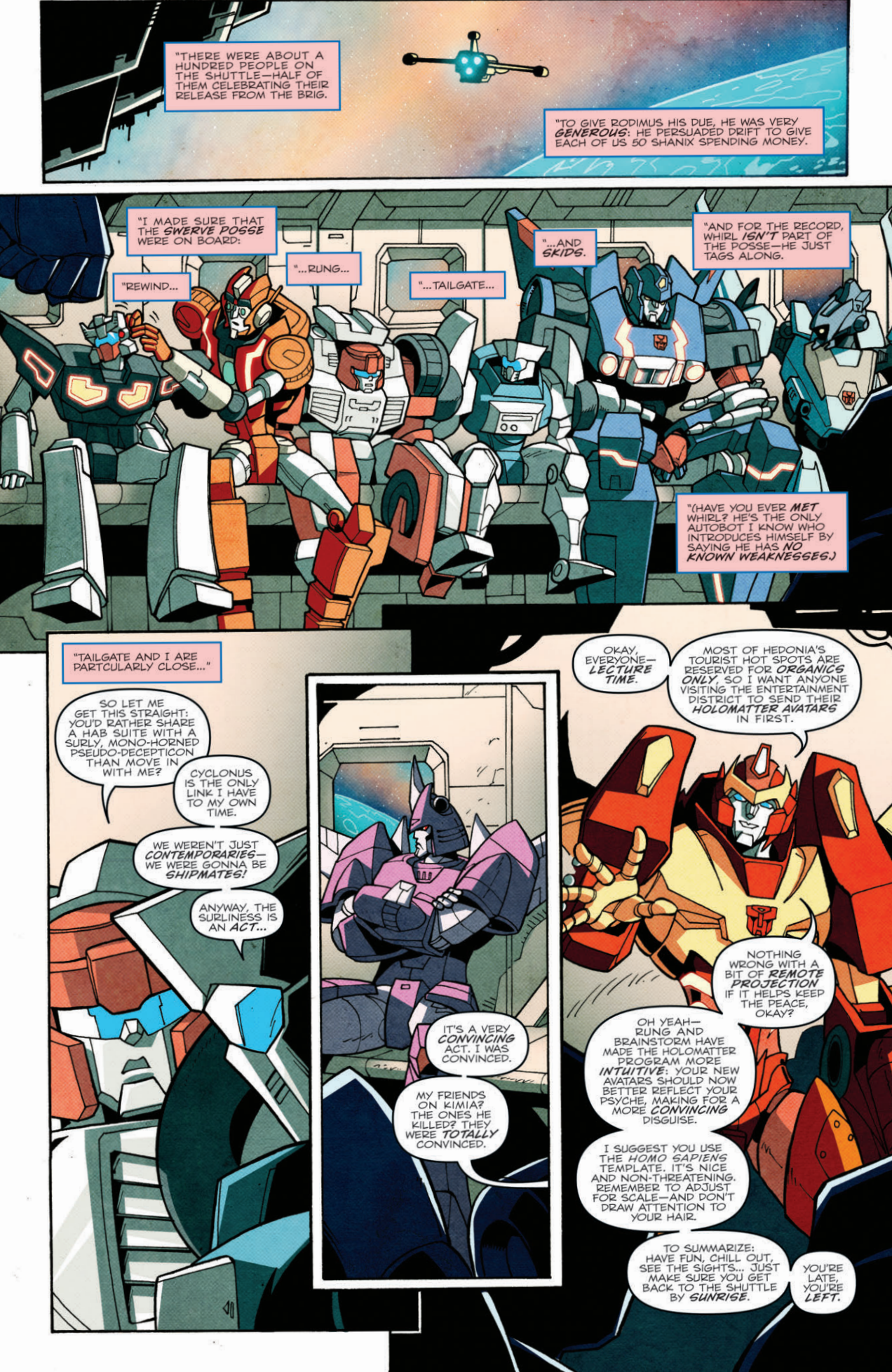
SO YEAH, LIFE ABOARD THE LOST LIGHT IS A BIG CRAZY BAG OF ADVENTURES.
I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT THE DEAD COMING BACK TO LIFE, OR FORT MAX GOING OFF HIS NUT, OR BRAINSTORM INVENTING AN EXISTENTIAL GUN THAT SHOOTS ENNUI—
(IT'S NOT FUNNY—PIPES NEARLY SHRUGGED HIMSELF TO DEATH...)
—BUT NONE OF THAT COMPARES TO WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY...

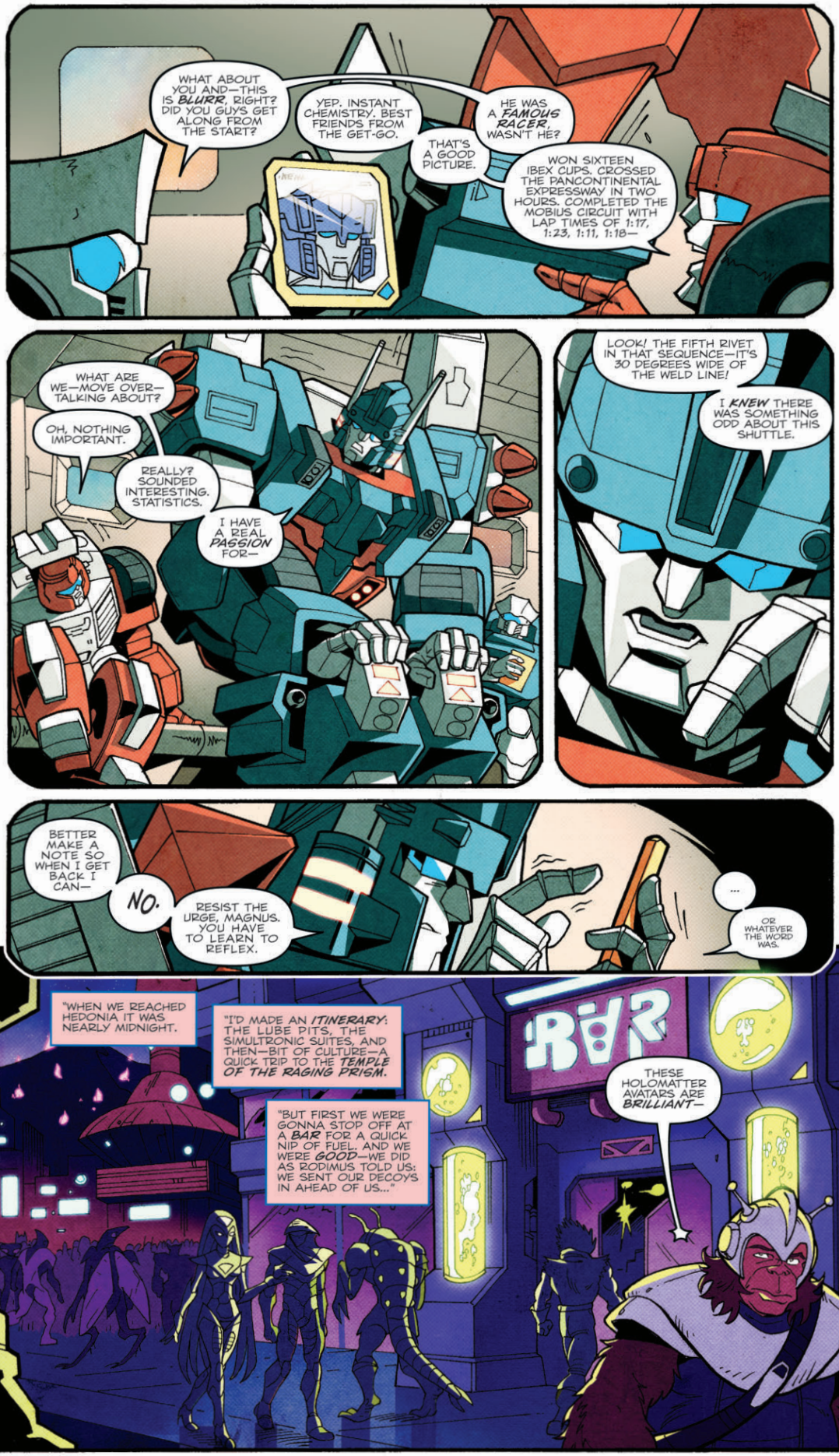

"...I WAS HEADING TO WORK—MORE ON THAT LATER—AND I HEARD THIS AWFUL NOISE. IT SOUNDED LIKE THIS:"
REARRRGH HHHURRGGH
"AND THEN—"
?!
HEY! UNWELCOME TOUCH!
AK AK SHEARRGH
DRIFT! WHAT DID WE SAY ABOUT UNDER THE ARM?
SORRY, BUT YOU WALKED STRAIGHT INTO A SECURITY OPERATION.
THE SCREAMING?
IT'S COMING FROM THE ROOM THAT LITTLE PANICKY GUY WITH THE LEGS SHARES WITH THAT DECEPTICON-WHO-SAYS-HE-ISN'T.
TAILGATE? CYCLONUS? YOU TWO ALRIGHT IN THERE?
HURRGGH REARRGH
I ALWAYS KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN.
WELL?
I'M JUST WONDERING IF THERE'S TIME TO EXPAND MY AURA AND CLEANSE THE AREA OF AGGRESSION...
I... DON'T THINK SO, DRIFT.
ON MY SIGNAL, THEN.
THREE, TWO, ONE...

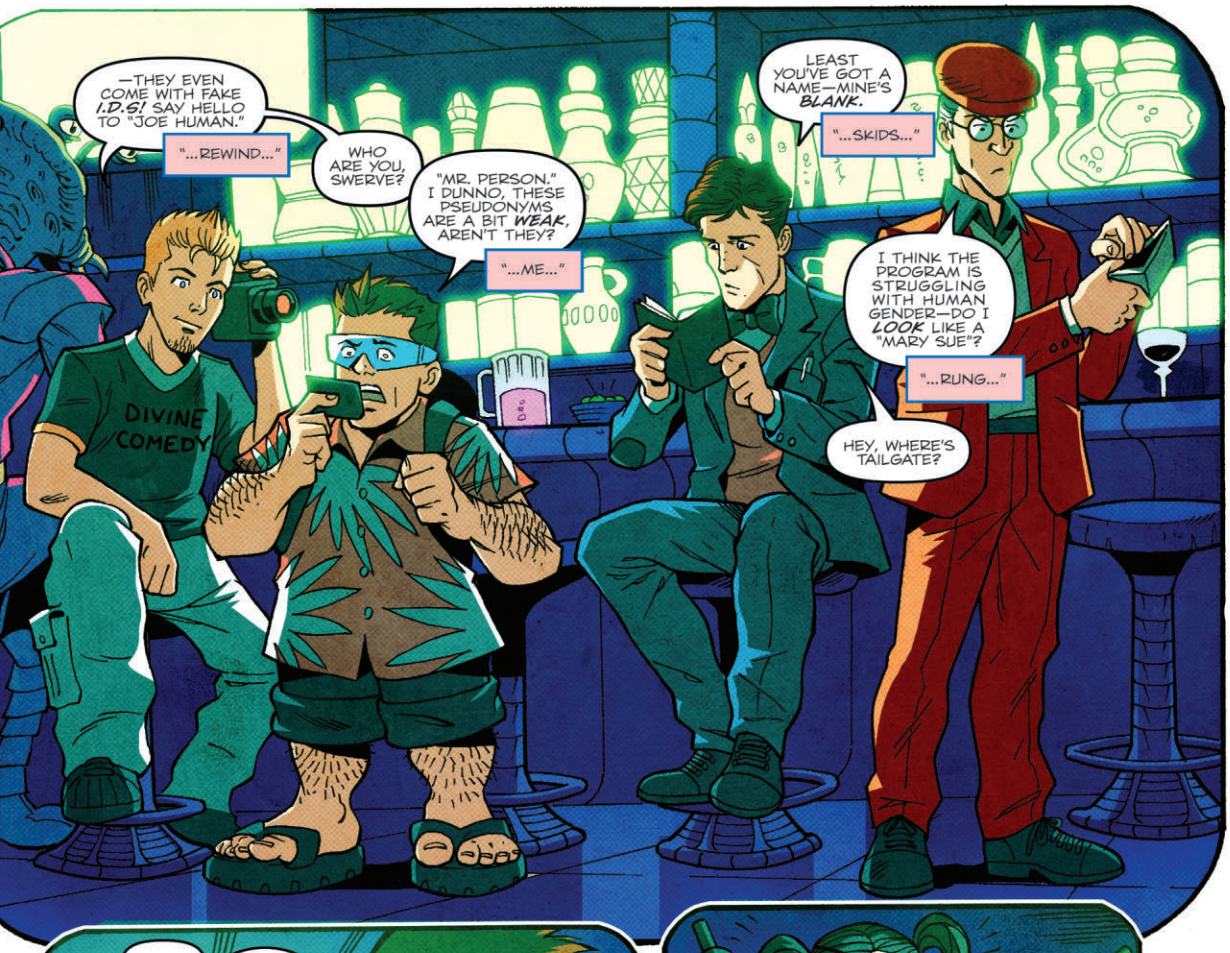

"...NOW!"
HANDS ON YOUR HEAD, YOU—
WAIT! WAIT!
STOP!
WHAT'S GOING ON, TAILGATE? WE HEARD SCREAMING...
YOU HEARD SINGING!
THAT WAS YOU?
ER...
THAT WAS YOU?!
YES. WHY IS THIS SURPRISING? A TRUE PATRIOT SINGS LOUDLY— AND OFTEN.
"GLORY TO CYBERTRON, GLINTING IN THE HEAVENS!"
A HYMN TO THE HOMELAND. YOU DON'T REMEMBER.
TOO YOUNG.
YOU SING IN THE MOTHER TONGUE, DON'T YOU, CYCLONUS?
OLD CYBERTRONIAN? I'VE NEVER HEARD IT SPOKEN, LET ALONE SUNG.
I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS SO...
TERRIFYING.
BEAUTIFUL?
THAT'LL BE THE TETRAHEXIAN ACCENT. AND THE VOLUME. AND THE, ER... THE GUSTO.
THE BALLADS ARE EVEN MORE INTENSE.

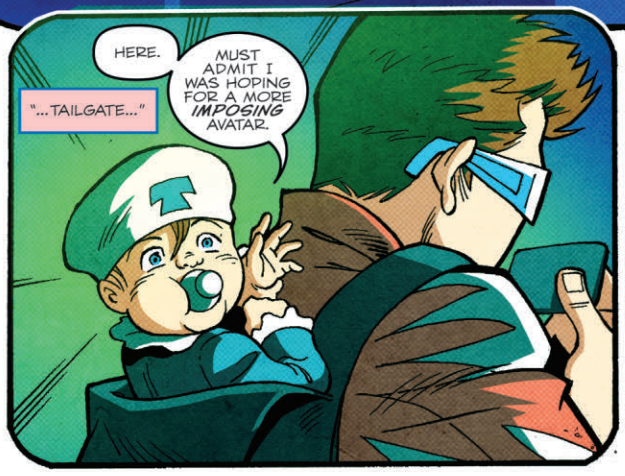
CYBERTRONIAN HOMESICK BLUES
"A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF DRIFT, BUT I'VE ALWAYS FOUND HIM TO BE THE ARCHETYPAL SYK-ADDICT-TURNED-DECEPTICON-PSYCHOPATH-TURNED-AUTOBOT-NINJA-TURNED-FLAKY SPIRITUALIST.
"I LIKE HIM."
MOVE INTO YOUR HAB SUITE? SERIOUSLY?
I MEAN, YOU'D HAVE TO MAKE IT ONTO THE SHORTLIST, BUT—IN PRINCIPLE—WHAT DO YOU SAY?
SURE—THERE'S A VACANCY.
I'M FLATTERED, BUT—WHEN I HAVE TIME TO MYSELF I PREFER TO SPEND IT ALONE, IN A STATE OF HEIGHTENED ISOLATION, EXPLORING THE LIMITS OF SOLITUDE.
HEY, ME TOO!
WE COULD EXPLORE THE LIMITS OF SOLITUDE TOGETHER!
YOU'VE BEEN AGES.
SORRY, FALSE ALARM.
WHERE WERE WE?
YOU WERE TEACHING ME HOW TO PARRY. WHAT KIND OF FALSE ALARM?
OH, JUST—CYCLONUS WAS SINGING IN FRONT OF TAILGATE.
THOSE TWO HAVE A VERY ODD RELATIONSHIP.
MUTINY!
EVERYWHERE I LOOK I SEE RULES BEING STRETCHED AND LAWS BEING BROKEN AND PROTOCOLS BEING DRAGGED OUTSIDE AND KICKED TO DEATH.
I'VE MADE A LIST: ONE, SKIDS KEEPS USING THE MAINTENANCE DROIDS FOR TARGET PRACTICE; TWO, WAVERIDER AND SURESHOT INSIST ON PLAYING HAND-GRENADE TAG OUTSIDE MY OFFICE...

...THREE: THE WARNING SIGNS THAT DIPSTICK'S PUT UP IN THE ENGINE ROOMS ARE RIDDLED WITH MISPLACED APOSTROPHES; FOUR: SPROCKET KEEPS TOUCHING HIS—
MAGNUS!
CAN WE JUST—CAN WE JUST PAUSE FOR A MOMENT.
THESE RULE BREAKERS—AND I USE THE TERM IN AN EXCEPTIONALLY LOOSE SENSE—WHAT'VE YOU DONE WITH THEM ALL?
I'VE... IMPOSED APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES.
I PUT THEM IN THE BRIG.
IS THAT MAGNUS-SPEAK FOR "I'VE HAD THEM ALL KILLED"?
YOU PUT THEM IN THE—?
WITH THE DECEPTICONS?
YOU'RE TAKING THIS WAY TOO FAR.
YOU THINK YOU'RE BEING—WHAT? DILIGENT? WELL YOU'RE NOT; YOU'RE JUST BEING PREPOSTEROUS.
LISTEN—WE'RE TWO HOURS AWAY FROM HEDONIA. MAYBE THE CREW DESERVE SOME SHORE LEAVE. YOU IN PARTICULAR.
WHAT DO YOU RECKON? HM?
SWERVE COULD SHOW YOU THE SIGHTS...
WHOA, SWERVE COULD WHAT?
SIGH
MAYBE I HAVE BEEN TAKING THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY. MAYBE I SHOULD TRY AND... AND... WHATEVER.
THERE'S A WORD FOR IT.
RELAX?
THAT'S NOT EVEN A WORD. I'D HAVE HEARD OF IT.
C'MON—IF ANYONE CAN CHEER HIM UP, YOU CAN.
YOU SAY "CHEER HIM UP" LIKE IT'S SOMETHING OTHER THAN A CENTURIES-LONG UNDERTAKING DESTINED TO END IN MADNESS AND SUICIDE.
I THINK IT WOULD REFLECT WELL ON SOMEONE WHO WANTS HIS BAR LICENSE RENEWED...
BUT I DON'T EVEN HAVE A—
AH. I SEE WHAT YOU DID THERE.
HEY, MAGNUS!
SEE YOU IN TWO HOURS!


"THERE WERE ABOUT A HUNDRED PEOPLE ON THE SHUTTLE—HALF OF THEM CELEBRATING THEIR RELEASE FROM THE BRIG.
"TO GIVE RODIMUS HIS DUE, HE WAS VERY GENEROUS: HE PERSUADED DRIFT TO GIVE EACH OF US 50 SHANIX SPENDING MONEY.
"I MADE SURE THAT THE SWERVE POSSE WERE ON BOARD:
"REWIND...
"...RUNG...
"...TAILGATE...
"...AND SKIDS.
"AND FOR THE RECORD, WHIRL ISN'T PART OF THE POSSE—HE JUST TAGS ALONG.
"(HAVE YOU EVER MET WHIRL? HE'S THE ONLY AUTOBOT I KNOW WHO INTRODUCES HIMSELF BY SAYING HE HAS NO KNOWN WEAKNESSES.)
"TAILGATE AND I ARE PARTCULARLY CLOSE..."
SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT: YOU'D RATHER SHARE A HAB SUITE WITH A SURLY, MONO-HORNED PSEUDO-DECEPTICON THAN MOVE IN WITH ME?
CYCLONUS IS THE ONLY LINK I HAVE TO MY OWN TIME.
WE WEREN'T JUST CONTEMPORARIES—WE WERE GONNA BE SHIPMATES!
ANYWAY, THE SURLINESS IS AN ACT...
IT'S A VERY CONVINCING ACT. I WAS CONVINCED.
MY FRIENDS ON KIMIA? THE ONES HE KILLED? THEY WERE TOTALLY CONVINCED.
OKAY, EVERYONE—LECTURE TIME.
MOST OF HEDONIA'S TOURIST HOT SPOTS ARE RESERVED FOR ORGANICS ONLY, SO I WANT ANYONE VISITING THE ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT TO SEND THEIR HOLOMATTER AVATARS IN FIRST.
NOTHING WRONG WITH A BIT OF REMOTE PROJECTION IF IT HELPS KEEP THE PEACE, OKAY?
OH YEAH—RUNG AND BRAINSTORM HAVE MADE THE HOLOMATTER PROGRAM MORE INTUITIVE: YOUR NEW AVATARS SHOULD NOW BETTER REFLECT YOUR PSYCHE, MAKING FOR A MORE CONVINCING DISGUISE.
I SUGGEST YOU USE THE HOMO SAPIENS TEMPLATE. IT'S NICE AND NON-THREATENING. REMEMBER TO ADJUST FOR SCALE—AND DON'T DRAW ATTENTION TO YOUR HAIR.
TO SUMMARIZE: HAVE FUN, CHILL OUT, SEE THE SIGHTS... JUST MAKE SURE YOU GET BACK TO THE SHUTTLE BY SUNRISE.
YOU'RE LATE, YOU'RE LEFT.

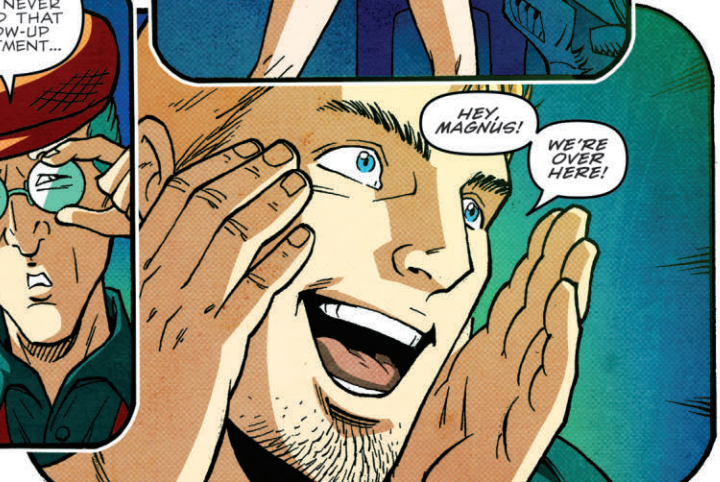

WHAT ABOUT YOU AND—THIS IS BLURR, RIGHT? DID YOU GUYS GET ALONG FROM THE START?
YEP. INSTANT CHEMISTRY. BEST FRIENDS FROM THE GET-GO.
HE WAS A FAMOUS RACER, WASN'T HE?
THAT'S A GOOD PICTURE.
WON SIXTEEN IBEX CUPS. CROSSED THE PANCONTINENTAL EXPRESSWAY IN TWO HOURS. COMPLETED THE MOBIUS CIRCUIT WITH LAP TIMES OF 1:17, 1:23, 1:11, 1:18—
WHAT ARE WE—MOVE OVER—TALKING ABOUT?
OH, NOTHING IMPORTANT.
REALLY? SOUNDED INTERESTING. STATISTICS.
I HAVE A REAL PASSION FOR—
LOOK! THE FIFTH RIVET IN THAT SEQUENCE—IT'S 30 DEGREES WIDE OF THE WELD LINE!
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING ODD ABOUT THIS SHUTTLE.
BETTER MAKE A NOTE SO WHEN I GET BACK I CAN—
NO.
RESIST THE URGE, MAGNUS. YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO REFLEX.
...
OR WHATEVER THE WORD WAS.
"WHEN WE REACHED HEDONIA IT WAS NEARLY MIDNIGHT.
"I'D MADE AN ITINERARY: THE LUBE PITS, THE SIMULTRONIC SUITES, AND THEN—BIT OF CULTURE—A QUICK TRIP TO THE TEMPLE OF THE RAGING PRISM.
"BUT FIRST WE WERE GONNA STOP OFF AT A BAR FOR A QUICK NIP OF FUEL. AND WE WERE GOOD—WE DID AS RODIMUS TOLD US: WE SENT OUR DECOYS IN AHEAD OF US..."
BAR
THESE HOLOMATTER AVATARS ARE BRILLIANT—

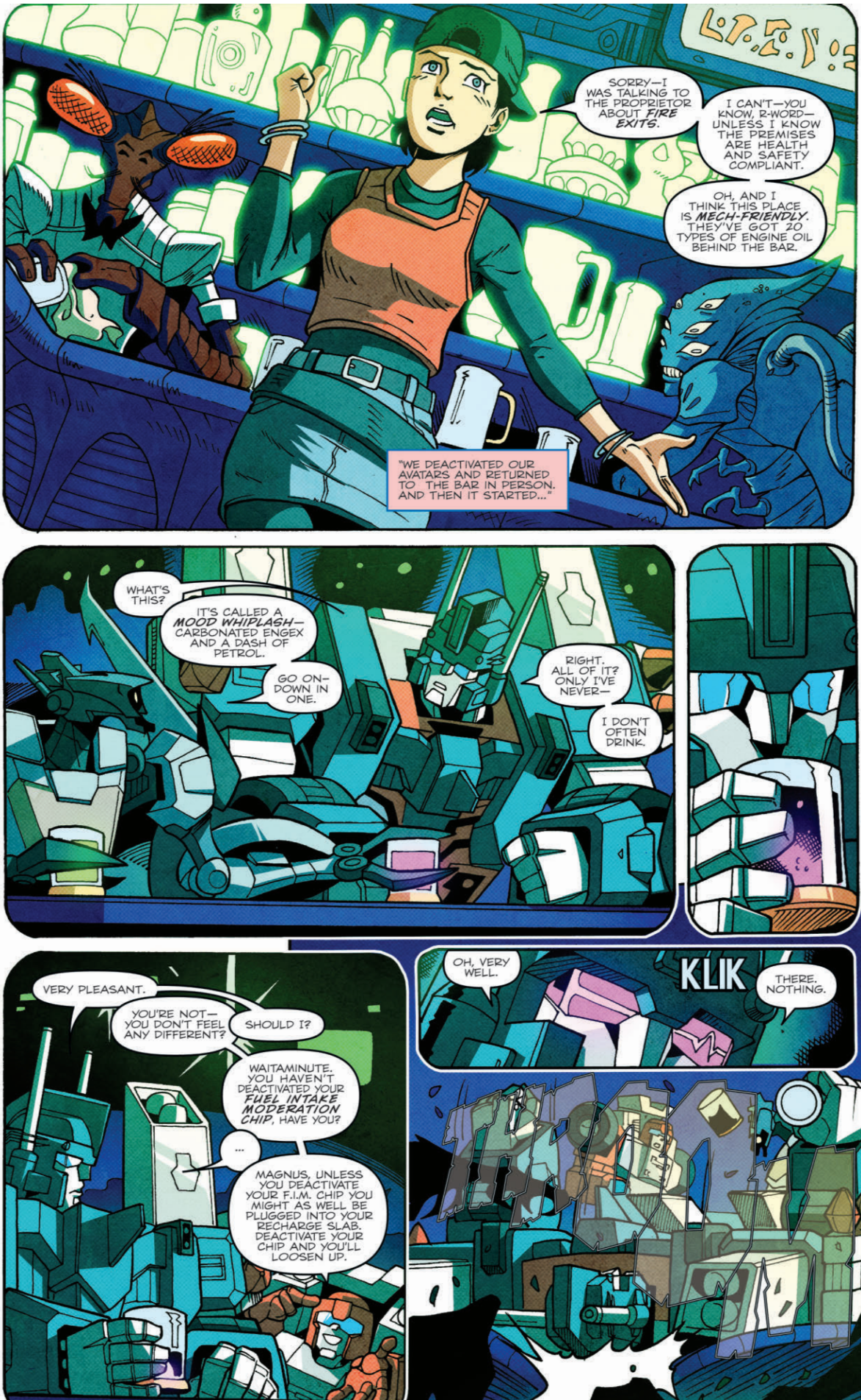

—THEY EVEN COME WITH FAKE I.D.S! SAY HELLO TO "JOE HUMAN."
"...REWIND..."
WHO ARE YOU, SWERVE?
"MR. PERSON." I DUNNO, THESE PSEUDONYMS ARE A BIT WEAK, AREN'T THEY?
"...ME..."
DIVINE COMEDY
LEAST YOU'VE GOT A NAME—MINE'S BLANK.
"...SKIDS..."
I THINK THE PROGRAM IS STRUGGLING WITH HUMAN GENDER—DO I LOOK LIKE A "MARY SUE"?
"...RUNG..."
HEY, WHERE'S TAILGATE?


HERE.
"...TAILGATE..."
MUST ADMIT I WAS HOPING FOR A MORE IMPOSING AVATAR.

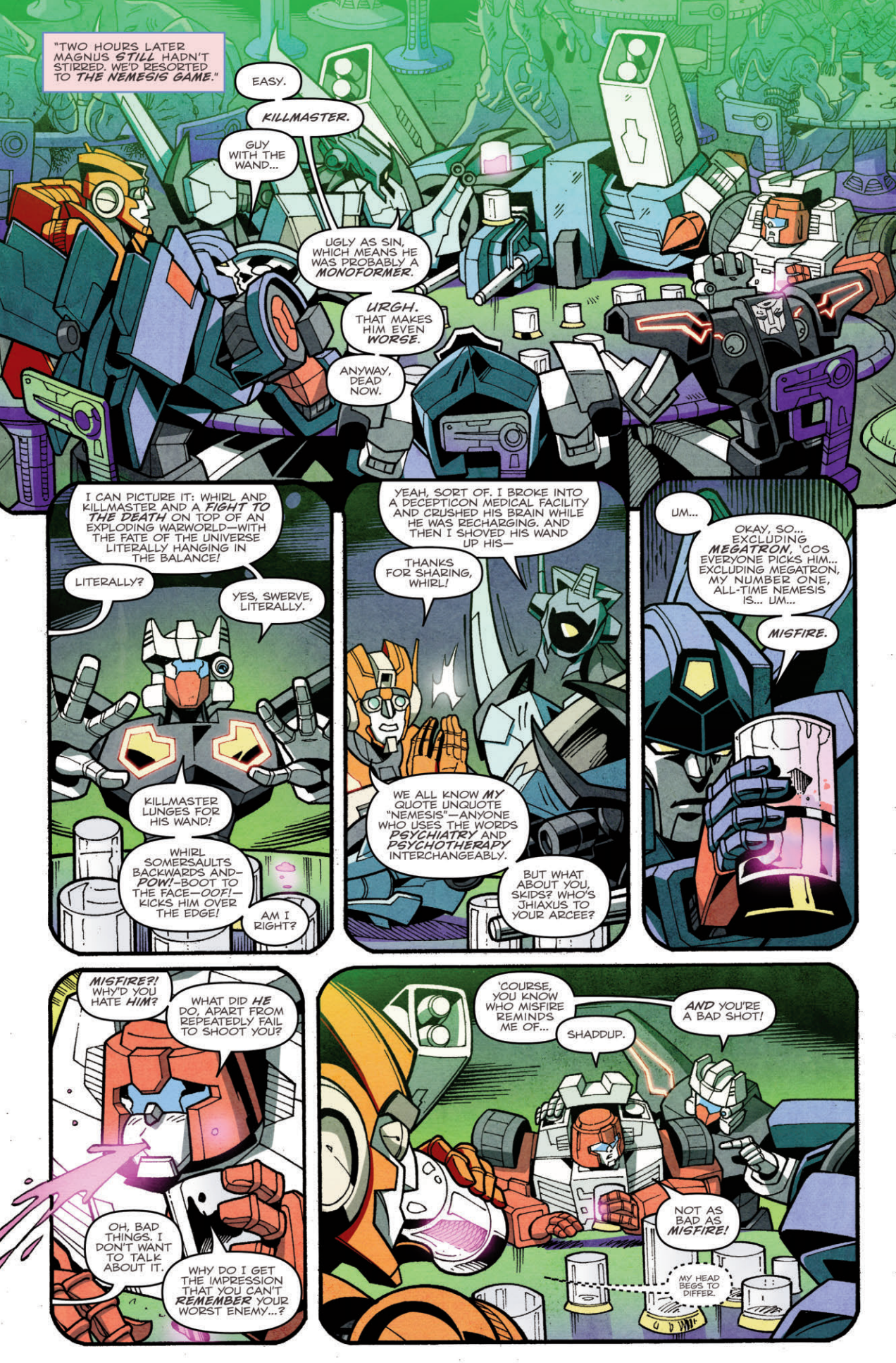
AT LEAST MINE COMES WITH THESE.
"...AND WHIRL."

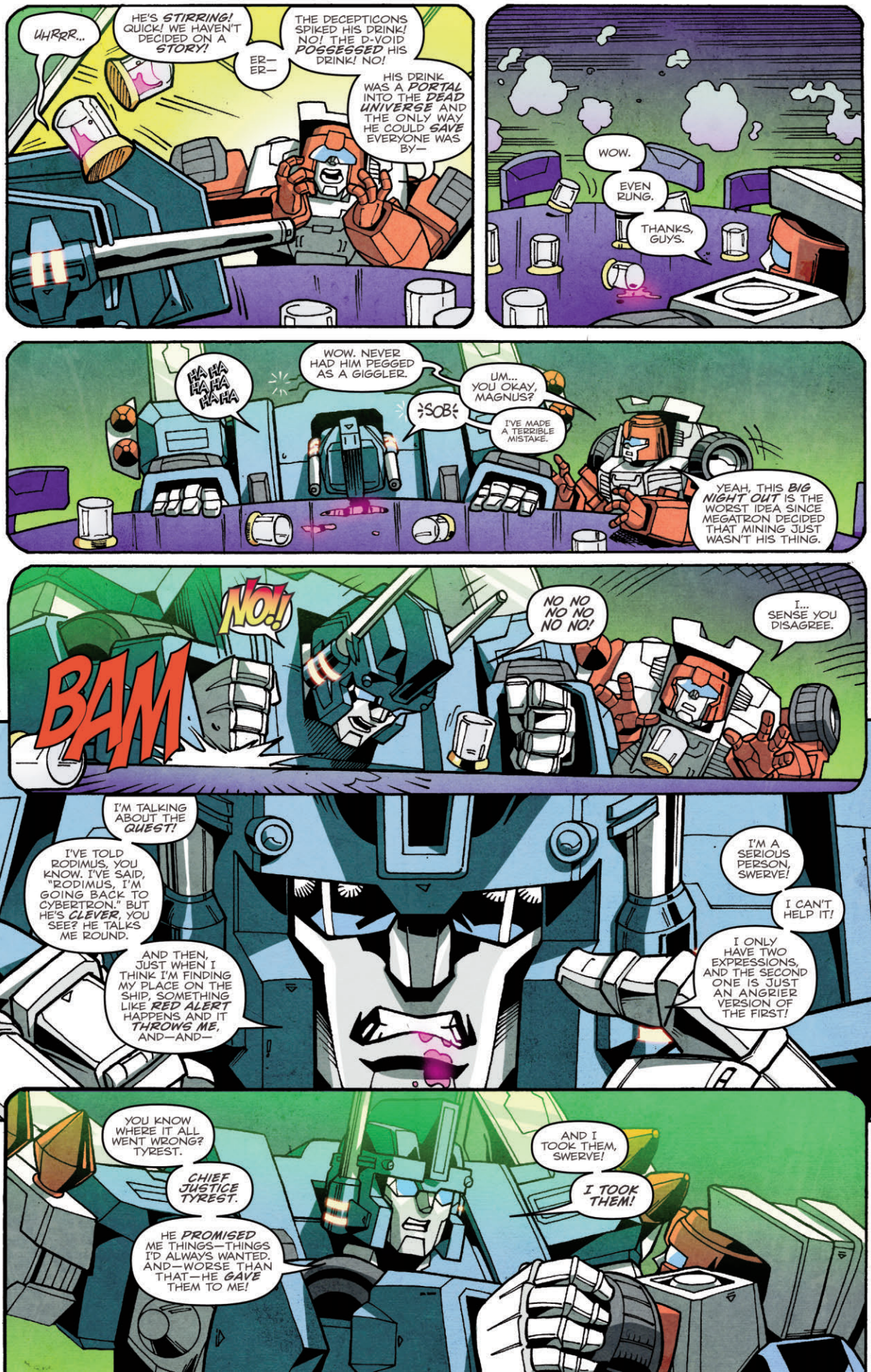
TELL ME, MARY SUE: WHAT DOES ULTRA MAGNUS' AVATAR SAY ABOUT HIS PSYCHE?
OH, THAT'S NOT BEEN AUTO-GENERATED; HE DESIGNED THAT HIMSELF. IT'S BASED ON AN OLD FRIEND OF HIS.
WHICH REMINDS ME: HE NEVER BOOKED THAT FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT...

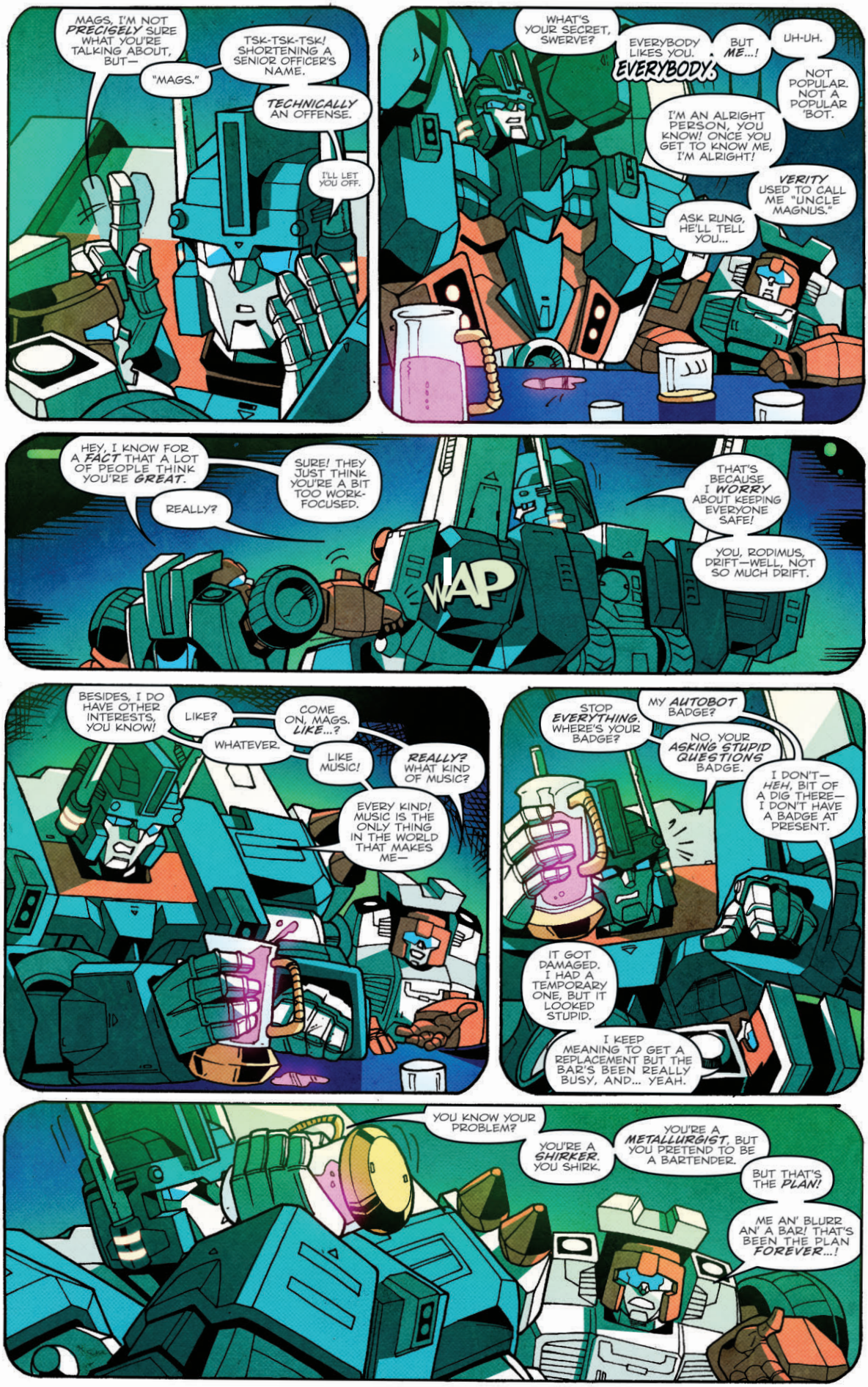

HEY, MAGNUS!
WE'RE OVER HERE!

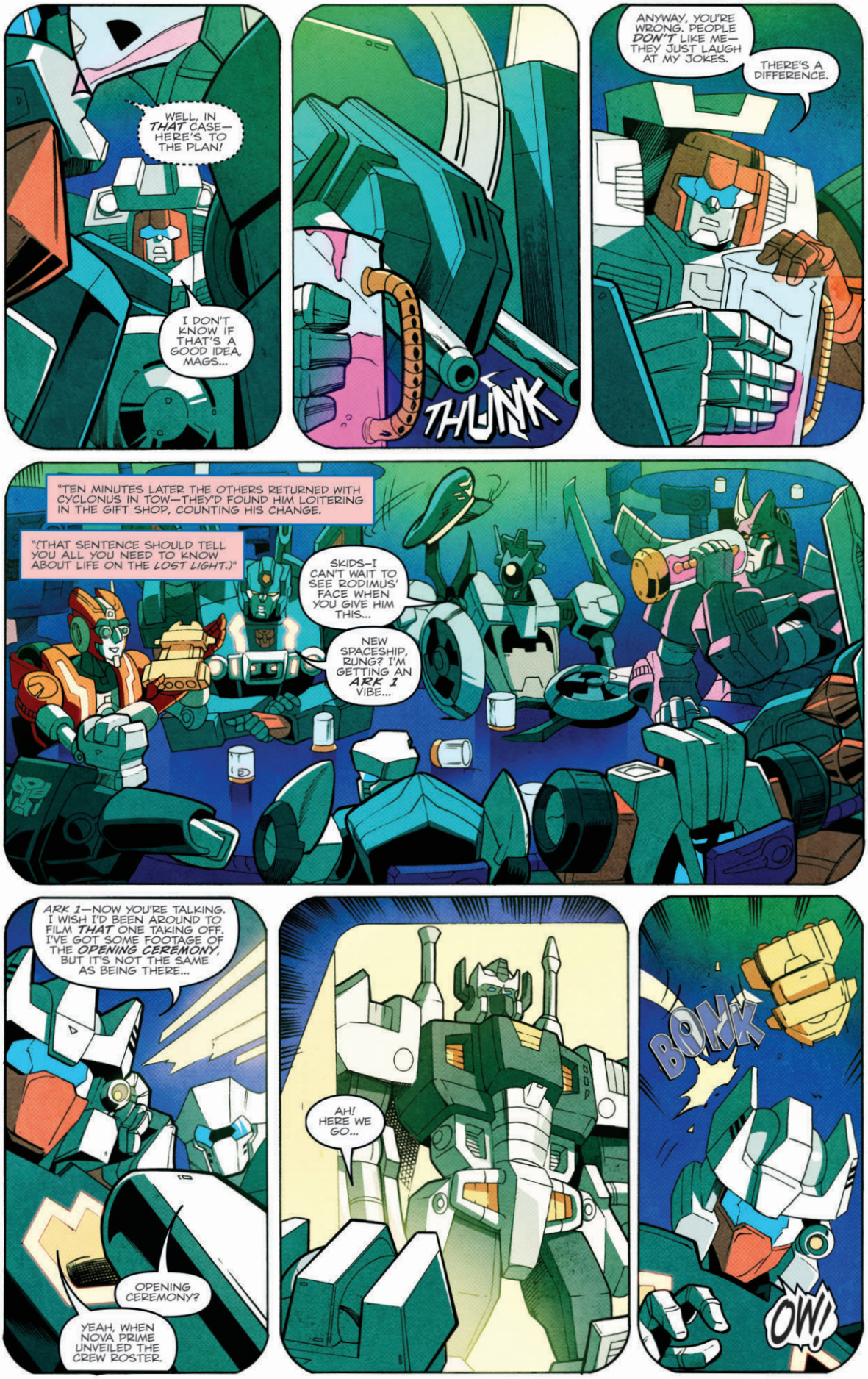

SORRY—I WAS TALKING TO THE PROPRIETOR ABOUT *FIRE EXITS*.
I CAN'T—YOU KNOW, R-WORD—UNLESS I KNOW THE PREMISES ARE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPLIANT.
OH, AND I THINK THIS PLACE IS *MECH-FRIENDLY*. THEY'VE GOT 20 TYPES OF ENGINE OIL BEHIND THE BAR.
"WE DEACTIVATED OUR AVATARS AND RETURNED TO THE BAR IN PERSON. AND THEN IT STARTED..."
WHAT'S THIS?
IT'S CALLED A *MOOD WHIPLASH*—CARBONATED ENGEX AND A DASH OF PETROL.
GO ON—DOWN IN ONE.
RIGHT. ALL OF IT? ONLY I'VE NEVER—
I DON'T OFTEN DRINK.
VERY PLEASANT.
YOU'RE NOT—YOU DON'T FEEL ANY DIFFERENT?
SHOULD I?
WAITAMINUTE. YOU HAVEN'T DEACTIVATED YOUR *FUEL INTAKE MODERATION CHIP*, HAVE YOU?
...
MAGNUS, UNLESS YOU DEACTIVATE YOUR F.I.M. CHIP YOU MIGHT AS WELL BE PLUGGED INTO YOUR RECHARGE SLAB. DEACTIVATE YOUR CHIP AND YOU'LL LOOSEN UP.
OH, VERY WELL.
KLIK
THERE. NOTHING.

I THINK HE'S DEAD. I THINK YOU KILLED HIM.
SHUT UP. OH MAN.
I'M GETTING A PANIC ON.
WAIT— THIS ISN'T CARBONATED ENGEX.
THIS IS WEAPONS-GRADE NUCLEON!
IS IT?
WELL, I NEVER.
YOU BOLT-HEAD! YOU'VE JUST KILLED ULTRA MAGNUS!
ME? YOU WERE THE ONE WHO MADE HIM DEACTIVATE HIS F.I.M. CHIP.
I'VE JUST KILLED ULTRA MAGNUS.
HOW BAD IS THIS?
IT'S BAD, ISN'T IT?
I KNOW NO-ONE LIKES HIM MUCH, BUT—
IT'S DEAD UNIVERSE BAD, ISN'T IT?
IT'S THUNDERWING BAD. NO—NO! IT'S WORSE—IT'S THUMB QUEST BAD.
HE'S NOT DEAD.
I CAN HEAR MOVING PARTS. LET'S GET HIM TO A TABLE AND GIVE HIM TIME TO COME ROUND.

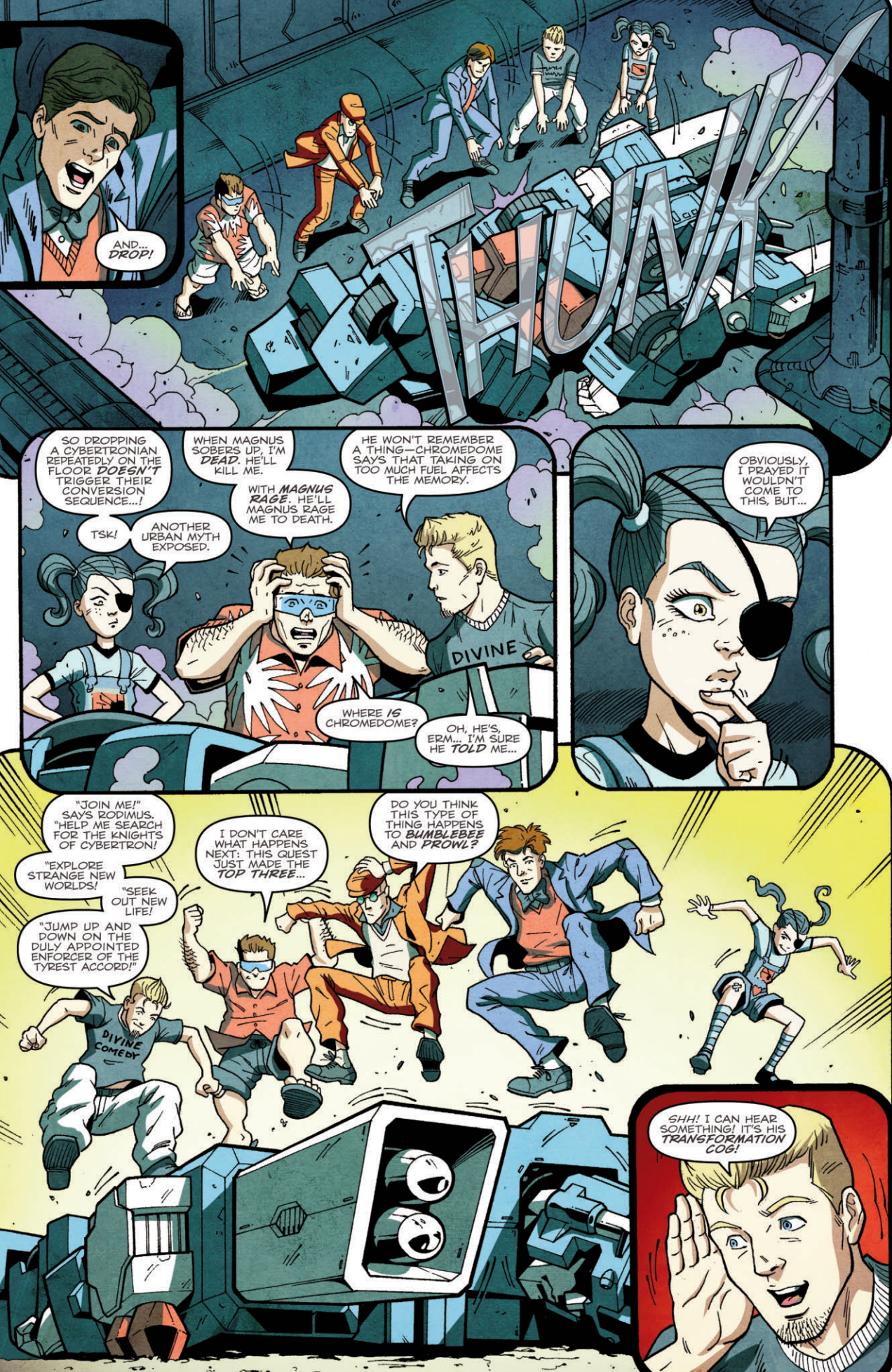

"TWO HOURS LATER. MAGNUS STILL HADN'T STIRRED. WE'D RESORTED TO THE NEMESIS GAME."
EASY.
KILLMASTER.
GUY WITH THE WAND...
UGLY AS SIN, WHICH MEANS HE WAS PROBABLY A MONOFORMER.
URGH. THAT MAKES HIM EVEN WORSE.
ANYWAY, DEAD NOW.
I CAN PICTURE IT: WHIRL AND KILLMASTER AND A FIGHT TO THE DEATH ON TOP OF AN EXPLODING WARWORLD—WITH THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE LITERALLY HANGING IN THE BALANCE!
LITERALLY?
YES, SWERVE, LITERALLY.
KILLMASTER LUNGES FOR HIS WAND!
WHIRL SOMERSAULTS BACKWARDS AND—POW!—BOOT TO THE FACE—OOF!—KICKS HIM OVER THE EDGE!
AM I RIGHT?
YEAH, SORT OF. I BROKE INTO A DECEPTICON MEDICAL FACILITY AND CRUSHED HIS BRAIN WHILE HE WAS RECHARGING. AND THEN I SHOVED HIS WAND UP HIS—
THANKS FOR SHARING, WHIRL!
WE ALL KNOW MY QUOTE UNQUOTE "NEMESIS"—ANYONE WHO USES THE WORDS PSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY INTERCHANGEABLY.
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, SKIDS? WHO'S JHIAXUS TO YOUR ARCEE?
UM...
OKAY, SO... EXCLUDING MEGATRON, 'COS EVERYONE PICKS HIM... EXCLUDING MEGATRON, MY NUMBER ONE, ALL-TIME NEMESIS IS... UM...
MISFIRE.
MISFIRE?! WHY'D YOU HATE HIM?
WHAT DID HE DO, APART FROM REPEATEDLY FAIL TO SHOOT YOU?
OH, BAD THINGS. I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.
WHY DO I GET THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU CAN'T REMEMBER YOUR WORST ENEMY...?
'COURSE, YOU KNOW WHO MISFIRE REMINDS ME OF...
SHADDUP.
AND YOU'RE A BAD SHOT!
NOT AS BAD AS MISFIRE!
MY HEAD BEGS TO DIFFER.

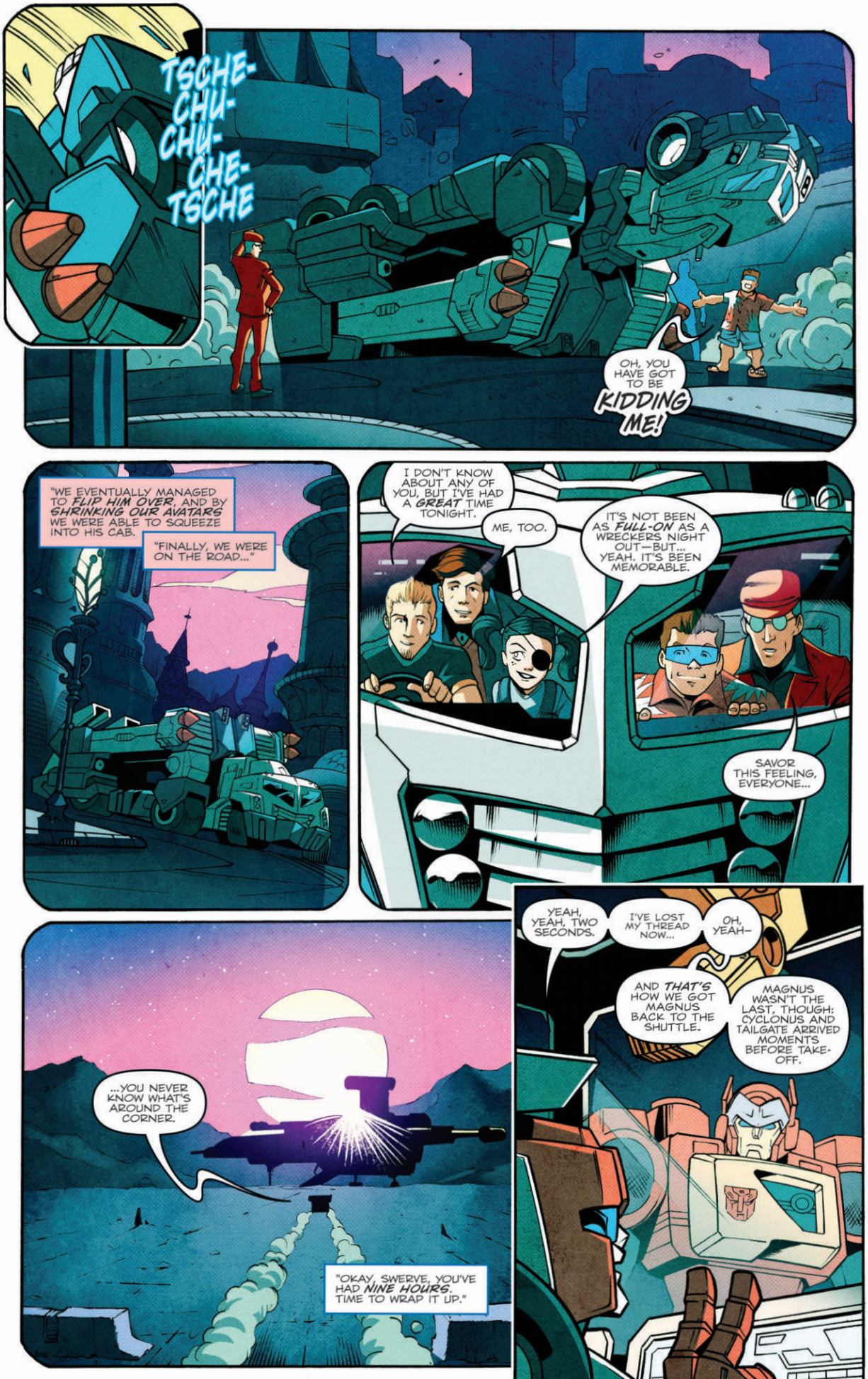

UHRRR...
HE'S STIRRING! QUICK! WE HAVEN'T DECIDED ON A STORY!
ER— ER—
THE DECEPTICONS SPIKED HIS DRINK! NO! THE D-VOID POSSESSED HIS DRINK! NO!
HIS DRINK WAS A PORTAL INTO THE DEAD UNIVERSE AND THE ONLY WAY HE COULD SAVE EVERYONE WAS BY—
WOW.
EVEN RUNG.
THANKS, GUYS.
HA HA HA HA HA HA
WOW. NEVER HAD HIM PEGGED AS A GIGGLER.
UM... YOU OKAY, MAGNUS?
SOB
I'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.
YEAH, THIS BIG NIGHT OUT IS THE WORST IDEA SINCE MEGATRON DECIDED THAT MINING JUST WASN'T HIS THING.
BAM
NO!
NO NO NO NO NO!
I... SENSE YOU DISAGREE.
I'M TALKING ABOUT THE QUEST!
I'VE TOLD RODIMUS, YOU KNOW. I'VE SAID, "RODIMUS, I'M GOING BACK TO CYBERTRON." BUT HE'S CLEVER, YOU SEE? HE TALKS ME ROUND.
AND THEN, JUST WHEN I THINK I'M FINDING MY PLACE ON THE SHIP, SOMETHING LIKE RED ALERT HAPPENS AND IT THROWS ME, AND—AND—
I'M A SERIOUS PERSON, SWERVE!
I CAN'T HELP IT!
I ONLY HAVE TWO EXPRESSIONS, AND THE SECOND ONE IS JUST AN ANGRIER VERSION OF THE FIRST!
YOU KNOW WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG? TYREST.
CHIEF JUSTICE TYREST.
HE PROMISED ME THINGS—THINGS I'D ALWAYS WANTED. AND—WORSE THAN THAT—HE GAVE THEM TO ME!
AND I TOOK THEM, SWERVE!
I TOOK THEM!

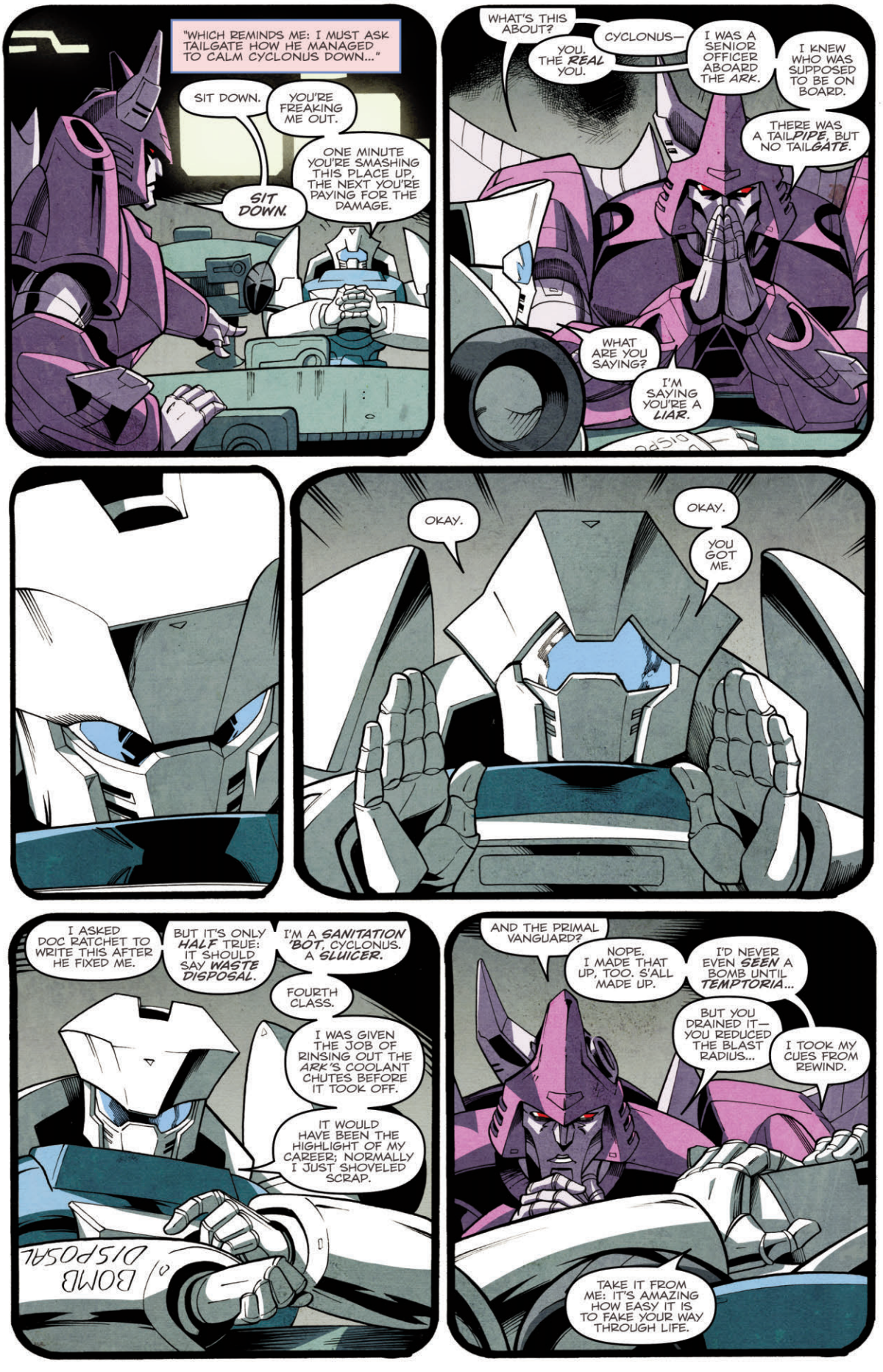

MAGS, I'M NOT PRECISELY SURE WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, BUT—
"MAGS."
TSK-TSK-TSK! SHORTENING A SENIOR OFFICER'S NAME.
TECHNICALLY AN OFFENSE.
I'LL LET YOU OFF.
WHAT'S YOUR SECRET, SWERVE?
EVERYBODY LIKES YOU.
EVERYBODY.
BUT ME...!
UH-UH.
NOT POPULAR. NOT A POPULAR 'BOT.
I'M AN ALRIGHT PERSON, YOU KNOW! ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW ME, I'M ALRIGHT!
VERITY USED TO CALL ME "UNCLE MAGNUS."
ASK RUNG, HE'LL TELL YOU...
HEY, I KNOW FOR A FACT THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK YOU'RE GREAT.
REALLY?
SURE! THEY JUST THINK YOU'RE A BIT TOO WORK-FOCUSED.
WAP
THAT'S BECAUSE I WORRY ABOUT KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE!
YOU, RODIMUS, DRIFT—WELL, NOT SO MUCH DRIFT.
BESIDES, I DO HAVE OTHER INTERESTS, YOU KNOW!
LIKE?
COME ON, MAGS. LIKE...?
WHATEVER.
LIKE MUSIC!
REALLY? WHAT KIND OF MUSIC?
EVERY KIND! MUSIC IS THE ONLY THING IN THE WORLD THAT MAKES ME—
STOP EVERYTHING. WHERE'S YOUR BADGE?
MY AUTOBOT BADGE?
NO, YOUR ASKING STUPID QUESTIONS BADGE.
I DON'T— HEH, BIT OF A DIG THERE— I DON'T HAVE A BADGE AT PRESENT.
IT GOT DAMAGED. I HAD A TEMPORARY ONE, BUT IT LOOKED STUPID.
I KEEP MEANING TO GET A REPLACEMENT BUT THE BAR'S BEEN REALLY BUSY, AND... YEAH.
YOU KNOW YOUR PROBLEM?
YOU'RE A SHIRKER. YOU SHIRK.
YOU'RE A METALLURGIST, BUT YOU PRETEND TO BE A BARTENDER.
BUT THAT'S THE PLAN!
ME AN' BLURR AN' A BAR! THAT'S BEEN THE PLAN FOREVER...!


WELL, IN THAT CASE—HERE'S TO THE PLAN!
I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S A GOOD IDEA, MAGS...
THUNK
ANYWAY, YOU'RE WRONG. PEOPLE DON'T LIKE ME—THEY JUST LAUGH AT MY JOKES.
THERE'S A DIFFERENCE.
"TEN MINUTES LATER THE OTHERS RETURNED WITH CYCLONUS IN TOW—THEY'D FOUND HIM LOITERING IN THE GIFT SHOP, COUNTING HIS CHANGE.
"(THAT SENTENCE SHOULD TELL YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE ON THE LOST LIGHT.)"
SKIDS—I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE RODIMUS' FACE WHEN YOU GIVE HIM THIS...
NEW SPACESHIP, RUNG? I'M GETTING AN ARK 1 VIBE...
ARK 1—NOW YOU'RE TALKING. I WISH I'D BEEN AROUND TO FILM THAT ONE TAKING OFF. I'VE GOT SOME FOOTAGE OF THE OPENING CEREMONY, BUT IT'S NOT THE SAME AS BEING THERE...
OPENING CEREMONY?
YEAH, WHEN NOVA PRIME UNVEILED THE CREW ROSTER.
AH! HERE WE GO...
BONK
OW!

CYCLONUS?! WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
HE'S LOST IT!
THWAK
SKIDS, WAIT!
IT'S THE ENGEX! HE AND I ARE SIX MILLION YEARS OLD— OUR SYSTEMS CAN'T HANDLE IT!
LEAVE HIM WITH ME— I'LL CALM HIM DOWN, I PROMISE.
WE'LL MEET YOU GUYS BACK AT THE SHUTTLE!
THE SHUTTLE! IT LEAVES IN 20 MINUTES!
WE'LL NEVER GET MAGNUS BACK IN TIME!
SO WHIRL— OF ALL PEOPLE— CAME UP WITH THIS GENIUS PLAN.
HE WOULD HELICOPTER EVERYONE BACK TO THE SHUTTLE.
ONCE ON BOARD, WE'D PROJECT OUR HOLOMATTER AVATARS BACK TO THE BAR, RETRIEVE MAGNUS, AND TRANSPORT HIM TO THE SHUTTLE USING A SHORT-CUT THROUGH AN ORGANICS-ONLY AREA.
"BUT SWERVE!" YOU CRY.
"IT'S NO USE BEING DISGUISED AS ORGANICS IF YOU'RE ALL CARRYING A 'BOT THE SIZE OF A SMALL MOON!"
BUT AH, YOU SEE?
BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE THE GENIUS PART COMES IN...


AND... DROP!
THUNK
SO DROPPING A CYBERTRONIAN REPEATEDLY ON THE FLOOR DOESN'T TRIGGER THEIR CONVERSION SEQUENCE...!
TSK!
ANOTHER URBAN MYTH EXPOSED.
WHEN MAGNUS SOBERS UP, I'M DEAD. HE'LL KILL ME.
WITH MAGNUS RAGE. HE'LL MAGNUS RAGE ME TO DEATH.
HE WON'T REMEMBER A THING—CHROMEDOME SAYS THAT TAKING ON TOO MUCH FUEL AFFECTS THE MEMORY.
DIVINE
WHERE IS CHROMEDOME?
OH, HE'S, ERM... I'M SURE HE TOLD ME...
OBVIOUSLY, I PRAYED IT WOULDN'T COME TO THIS, BUT...
"JOIN ME!" SAYS RODIMUS. "HELP ME SEARCH FOR THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON!
"EXPLORE STRANGE NEW WORLDS!
"SEEK OUT NEW LIFE!
"JUMP UP AND DOWN ON THE DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD!"
DIVINE COMEDY
I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT: THIS QUEST JUST MADE THE TOP THREE...
DO YOU THINK THIS TYPE OF THING HAPPENS TO BUMBLEBEE AND PROWL?
SHH! I CAN HEAR SOMETHING! IT'S HIS TRANSFORMATION COG!

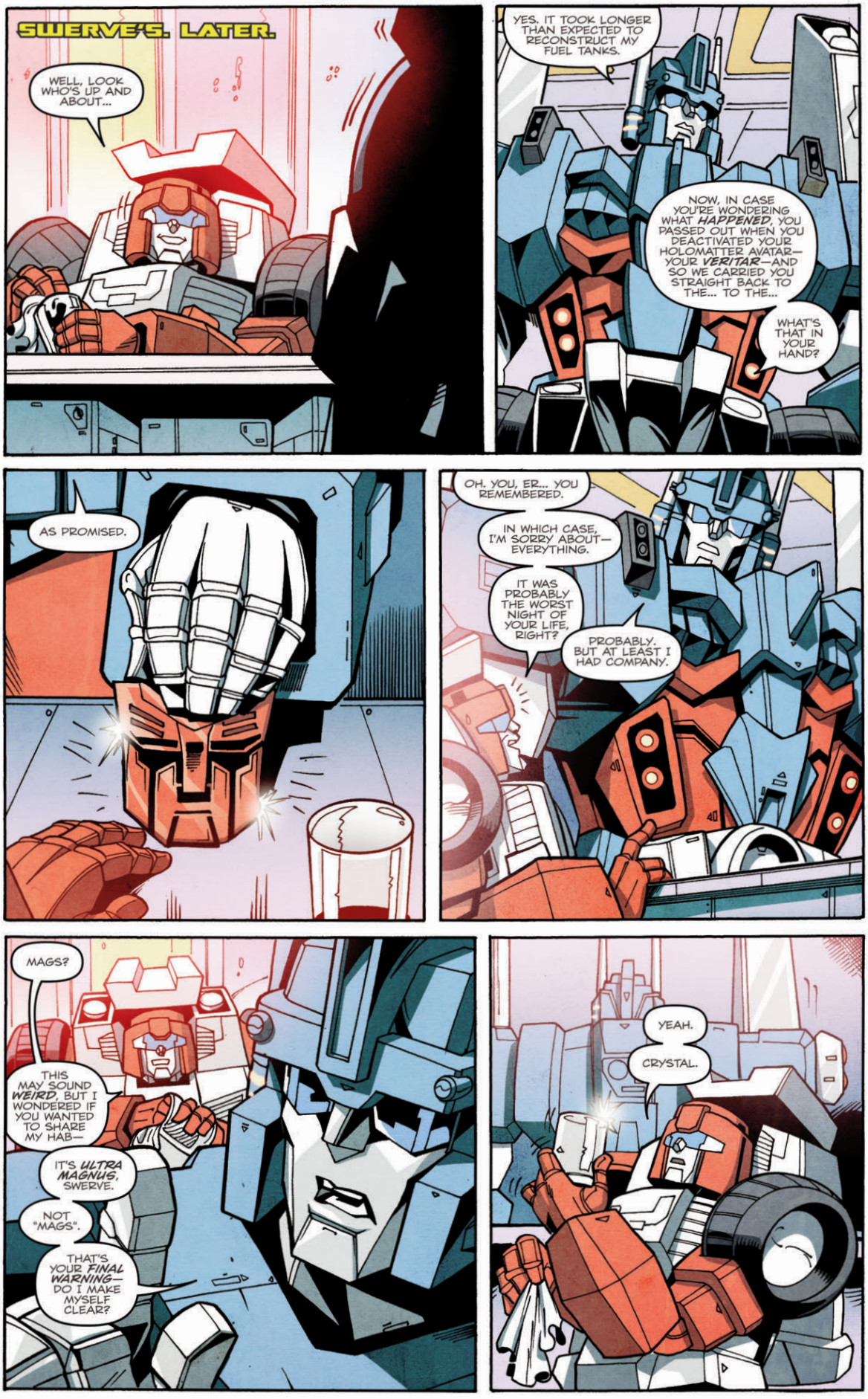

TSCHE-CHU-CHU-CHE-TSCHE
OH, YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!
"WE EVENTUALLY MANAGED TO FLIP HIM OVER, AND BY SHRINKING OUR AVATARS WE WERE ABLE TO SQUEEZE INTO HIS CAB.
"FINALLY, WE WERE ON THE ROAD..."
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ANY OF YOU, BUT I'VE HAD A GREAT TIME TONIGHT.
ME, TOO.
IT'S NOT BEEN AS FULL-ON AS A WRECKERS NIGHT OUT—BUT... YEAH. IT'S BEEN MEMORABLE.
SAVOR THIS FEELING, EVERYONE...
YEAH, YEAH, TWO SECONDS.
I'VE LOST MY THREAD NOW...
OH, YEAH—
AND THAT'S HOW WE GOT MAGNUS BACK TO THE SHUTTLE.
MAGNUS WASN'T THE LAST, THOUGH: CYCLONUS AND TAILGATE ARRIVED MOMENTS BEFORE TAKE-OFF.
...YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S AROUND THE CORNER.
"OKAY, SWERVE, YOU'VE HAD NINE HOURS. TIME TO WRAP IT UP."


"WHICH REMINDS ME: I MUST ASK TAILGATE HOW HE MANAGED TO CALM CYCLONUS DOWN..."
SIT DOWN.
YOU'RE FREAKING ME OUT.
ONE MINUTE YOU'RE SMASHING THIS PLACE UP, THE NEXT YOU'RE PAYING FOR THE DAMAGE.
SIT DOWN.
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?
CYCLONUS—
YOU. THE REAL YOU.
I WAS A SENIOR OFFICER ABOARD THE ARK.
I KNEW WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ON BOARD.
THERE WAS A TAILPIPE, BUT NO TAILGATE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING YOU'RE A LIAR.
OKAY.
OKAY.
YOU GOT ME.
I ASKED DOC RATCHET TO WRITE THIS AFTER HE FIXED ME.
BUT IT'S ONLY HALF TRUE: IT SHOULD SAY WASTE DISPOSAL.
I'M A SANITATION 'BOT, CYCLONUS. A SLUICER.
FOURTH CLASS.
I WAS GIVEN THE JOB OF RINSING OUT THE ARK'S COOLANT CHUTES BEFORE IT TOOK OFF.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE HIGHLIGHT OF MY CAREER; NORMALLY I JUST SHOVELED SCRAP.
BOMB DISPOSAL
AND THE PRIMAL VANGUARD?
NOPE. I MADE THAT UP, TOO. S'ALL MADE UP.
I'D NEVER EVEN SEEN A BOMB UNTIL TEMPTORIA...
BUT YOU DRAINED IT—YOU REDUCED THE BLAST RADIUS...
I TOOK MY CUES FROM REWIND.
TAKE IT FROM ME: IT'S AMAZING HOW EASY IT IS TO FAKE YOUR WAY THROUGH LIFE.

YOU KNEW, DIDN'T YOU? YOU KNEW THAT REWIND'S FOOTAGE WOULD EXPOSE ME AND YOU CREATED A DISTRACTION.
YOU SAVED ME.
THEY'LL FIND OUT ONE DAY, YOU KNOW.
YOU'RE AN IDIOT TO KEEP PRETENDING.
I'M WORSE THAN AN IDIOT—
I'M A NOBODY!
THINK ABOUT IT!
I FELL THROUGH THE MITTEOUS PLATEAU WHILE ON THE WAY TO THE ARK.
I SHOULD'VE BEEN FOUND IN DAYS!
BUT NO: EITHER NO ONE NOTICED I WAS MISSING, OR NO ONE CARED!
BOMB
I'LL TEACH YOU A SONG.
AN OLD SONG.
WHAT?
I SING BECAUSE I MISS CYBERTRON. IT HELPS.
...
OKAY.

HEH. NO.
LOUDER.
BETTER. NOW, TOGETHER—
OKAY, BLURR, ONE LAST THING BEFORE I SIGN OFF. READY..?
I'VE GOT MY OWN BAR!
IT'S CALLED "SWERVE'S", ALTHOUGH NO ONE ACTUALLY CALLS IT THAT YET. YOU HAVE TO COME VISIT.
AND THAT'S ME DONE!
"KEEP SPEEDIN', BUDDY. OVER AND OUT."
PROBLEM?
IT'S NOT RECOGNIZING THE NUMBER.
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS BLURR'S PERSONAL HAILING FREQUENCY?
I KNOW HIS NUMBER BY HEART—LOOK!
HE WROTE IT ON MY PALM THE LAST TIME I SPOKE TO HIM.
OKAY— AND WHEN WAS THAT?

FOUR MILLION YEARS AGO.
YEAH, IF YOU COULD MAKE IT OUT TO SWERVE, THAT'D BE...
I THINK YOU'RE GREAT, BY THE WAY. REALLY BIG FAN.
AND WHAT DO YOU DO, SWERVE?
ME? I'M TECHNICALLY A METALLURGIST, BUT I'M HOPING THE FUNCTIONISTS WILL LET ME RUN MY OWN BAR.
YOU EVER BEEN TO THE CIRCLE DOWNTOWN?
THE MUSIC'S AWFUL, BUT OTHERWISE IT'S PRETTY COOL.
I THINK I MIGHT BUY IT WHEN I RETIRE.
HEY, WE COULD OPEN A BAR TOGETHER!
GIVE ME YOUR PERSONAL HAILING FREQUENCY AND I'LL CALL YOU WHEN I'VE GOT MY OWN PLACE!
I PROMISE!
LOOK, BUDDY, I DON'T REALLY—
PLEEEASE?
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S YOUR NUMBER?
DOESN'T SEEM LONG ENOUGH.
NO, THAT'S, UM... THAT'S DEFINITELY IT.
THAT'S DEFINITELY IT.


SWERVE'S. LATER.
WELL, LOOK WHO'S UP AND ABOUT...
YES. IT TOOK LONGER THAN EXPECTED TO RECONSTRUCT MY FUEL TANKS.
NOW, IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED, YOU PASSED OUT WHEN YOU DEACTIVATED YOUR HOLOMATTER AVATAR—YOUR VERITAR—AND SO WE CARRIED YOU STRAIGHT BACK TO THE... TO THE...
WHAT'S THAT IN YOUR HAND?
AS PROMISED.
OH. YOU, ER... YOU REMEMBERED.
IN WHICH CASE, I'M SORRY ABOUT—EVERYTHING.
IT WAS PROBABLY THE WORST NIGHT OF YOUR LIFE, RIGHT?
PROBABLY. BUT AT LEAST I HAD COMPANY.
MAGS?
THIS MAY SOUND WEIRD, BUT I WONDERED IF YOU WANTED TO SHARE MY HAB—
IT'S ULTRA MAGNUS, SWERVE.
NOT "MAGS".
THAT'S YOUR FINAL WARNING—DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?
YEAH.
CRYSTAL.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #13 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

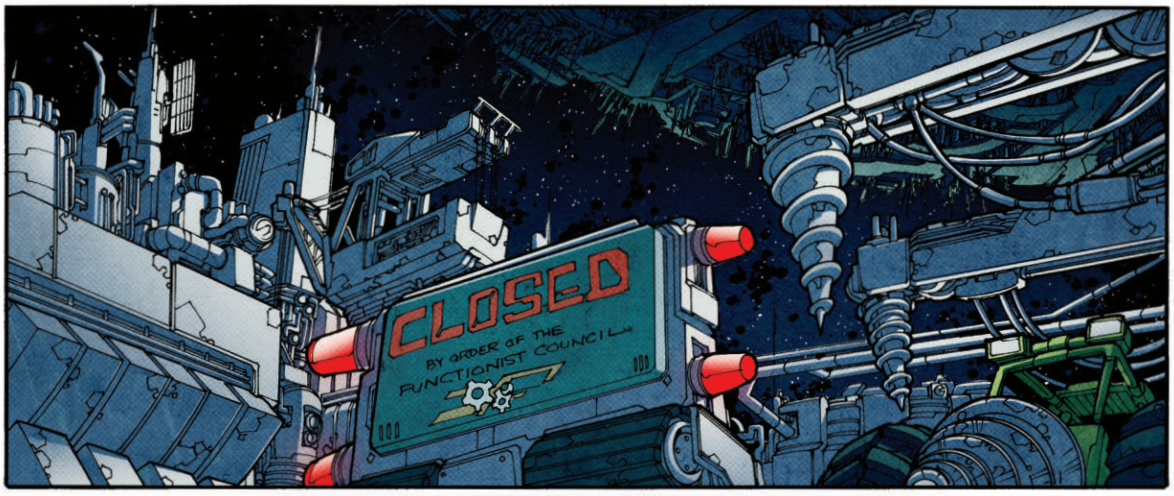
☐ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #14 COVER A

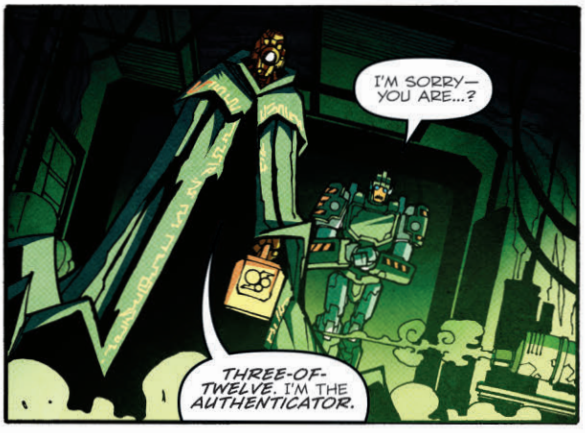
by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

# PROLOGUE: A FUNCTIONIST CALLS

TWO MILES BELOW GROUND
DON'T GET ME WRONG, THE AXE IS OKAY.
I'M NOT SAYING I DON'T LIKE THE AXE.
BUT I'D PREFER A DRILL.
DRILL'S GOTTA BE EARNED.
200 YEARS IT TOOK ME TO GET THIS.

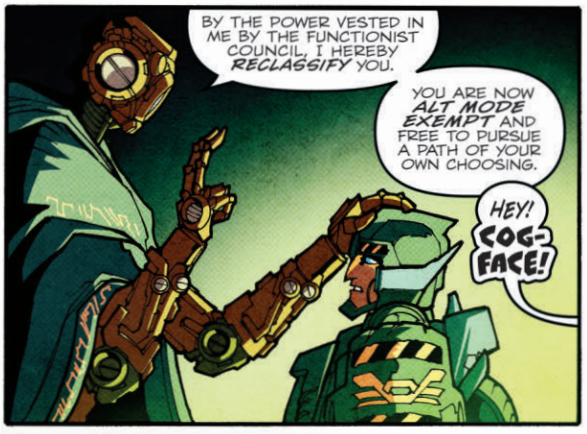
"...I THINK YOU'D BETTER SEND FOR SOMEONE."
MOMUS OF HELEX.
MO-MUS. I'M CALLING IN A CODE 113.
NO, A ONE—ONE—THREE.
COURSE I KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.
IT MEANS YOU'RE OBLIGED TO SEND SOMEONE—NOW.


CLOSED
BY ORDER OF THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL


I'M SORRY— YOU ARE...?
THREE-OF-TWELVE. I'M THE AUTHENTICATOR.

TIK TIK TIK TIK TIK

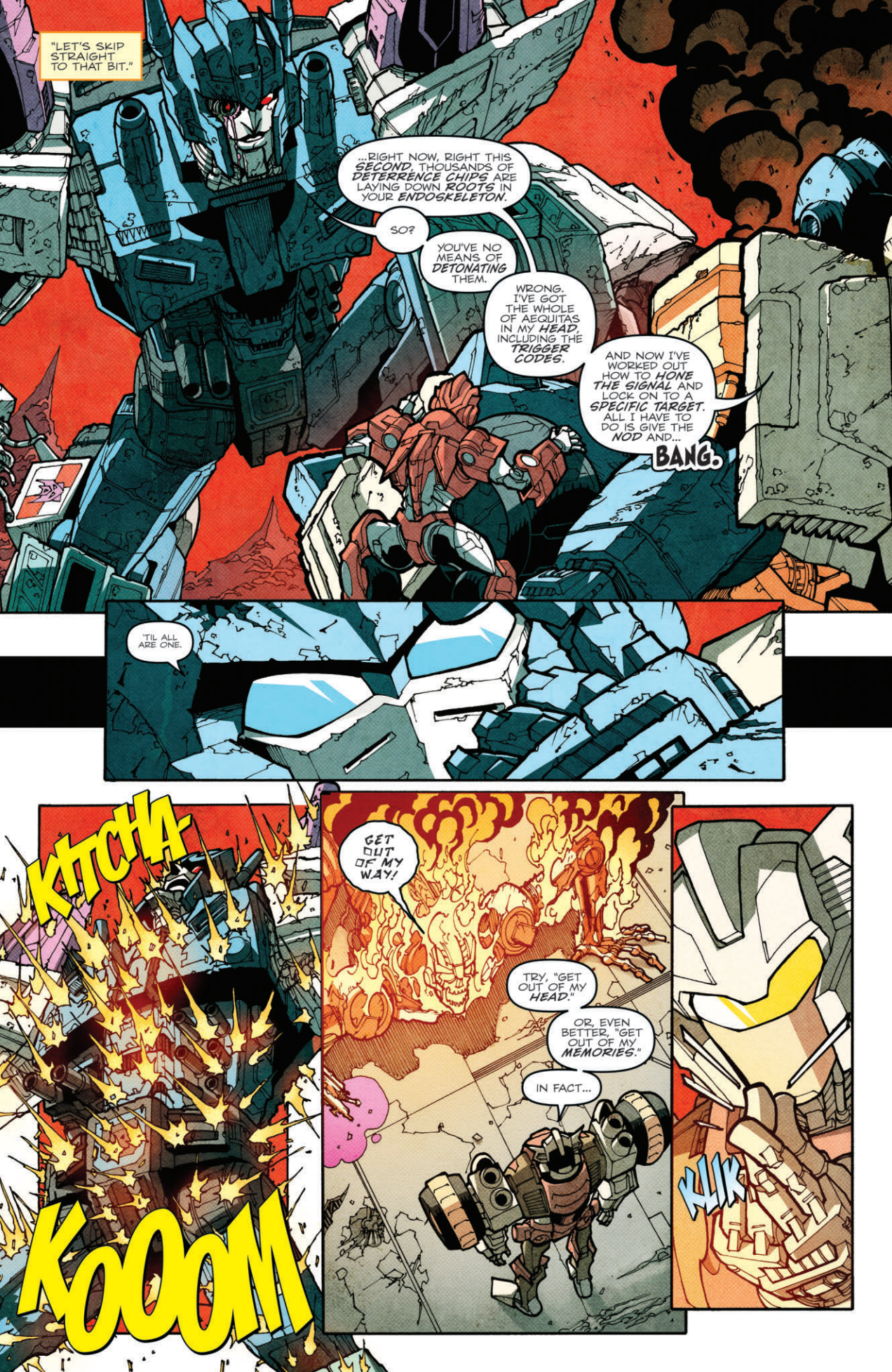
IT'S VIABLE. I WILL ARRANGE FOR IT TO BE EXCAVATED AHEAD OF THE NURTURING.
YOU'RE SAYING THIS IS A GENUINE POINT ONE PERCENTER?
A GRAVE MISUSE OF STATISTICS, BUT YES—THE FIRST IN TEN GENERATIONS.
WHICH MEANS... THERE'S A REWARD, ISN'T THERE?

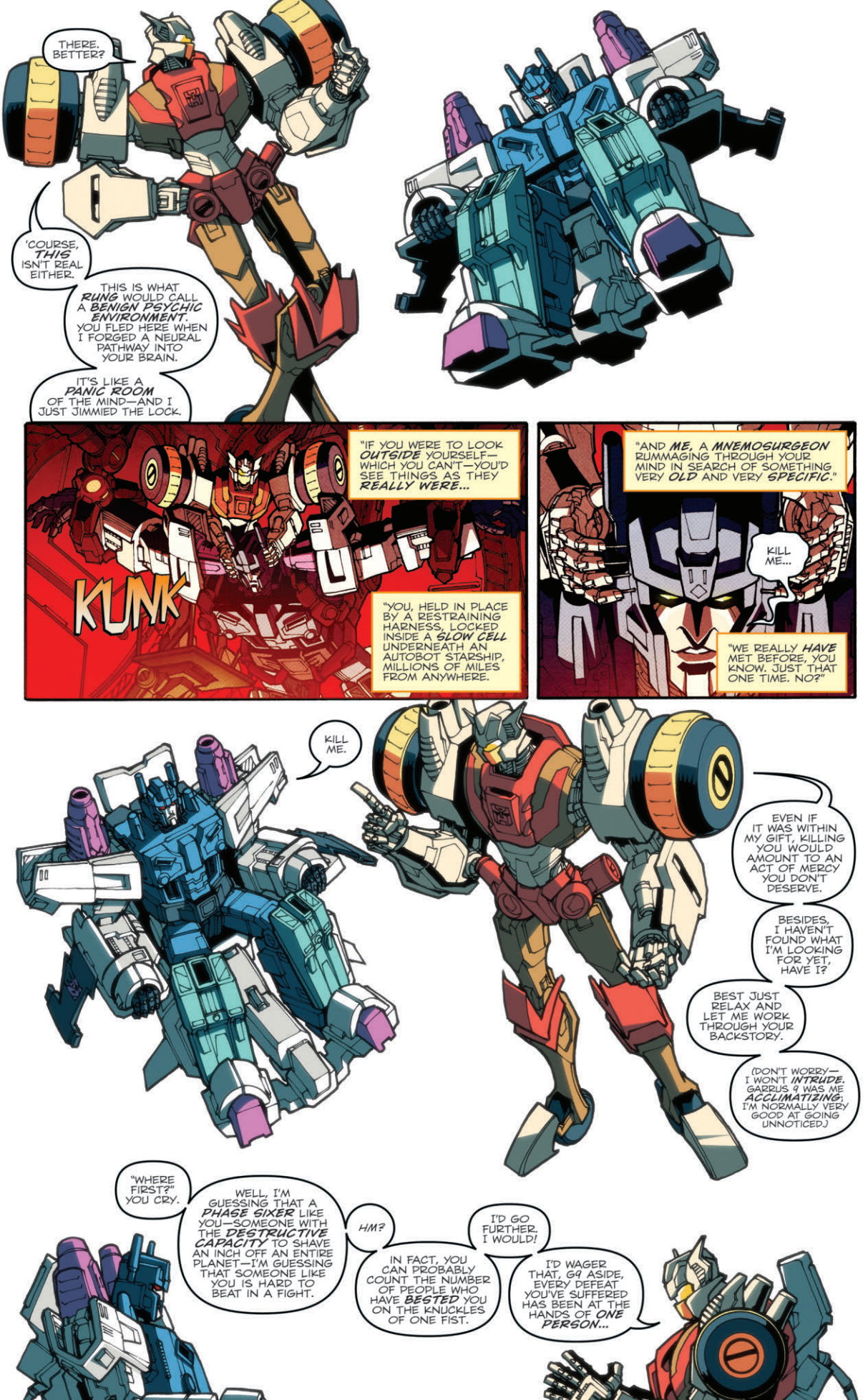

BY THE POWER VESTED IN ME BY THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL, I HEREBY RECLASSIFY YOU.
YOU ARE NOW ALT MODE EXEMPT AND FREE TO PURSUE A PATH OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING.
HEY! COG-FACE!

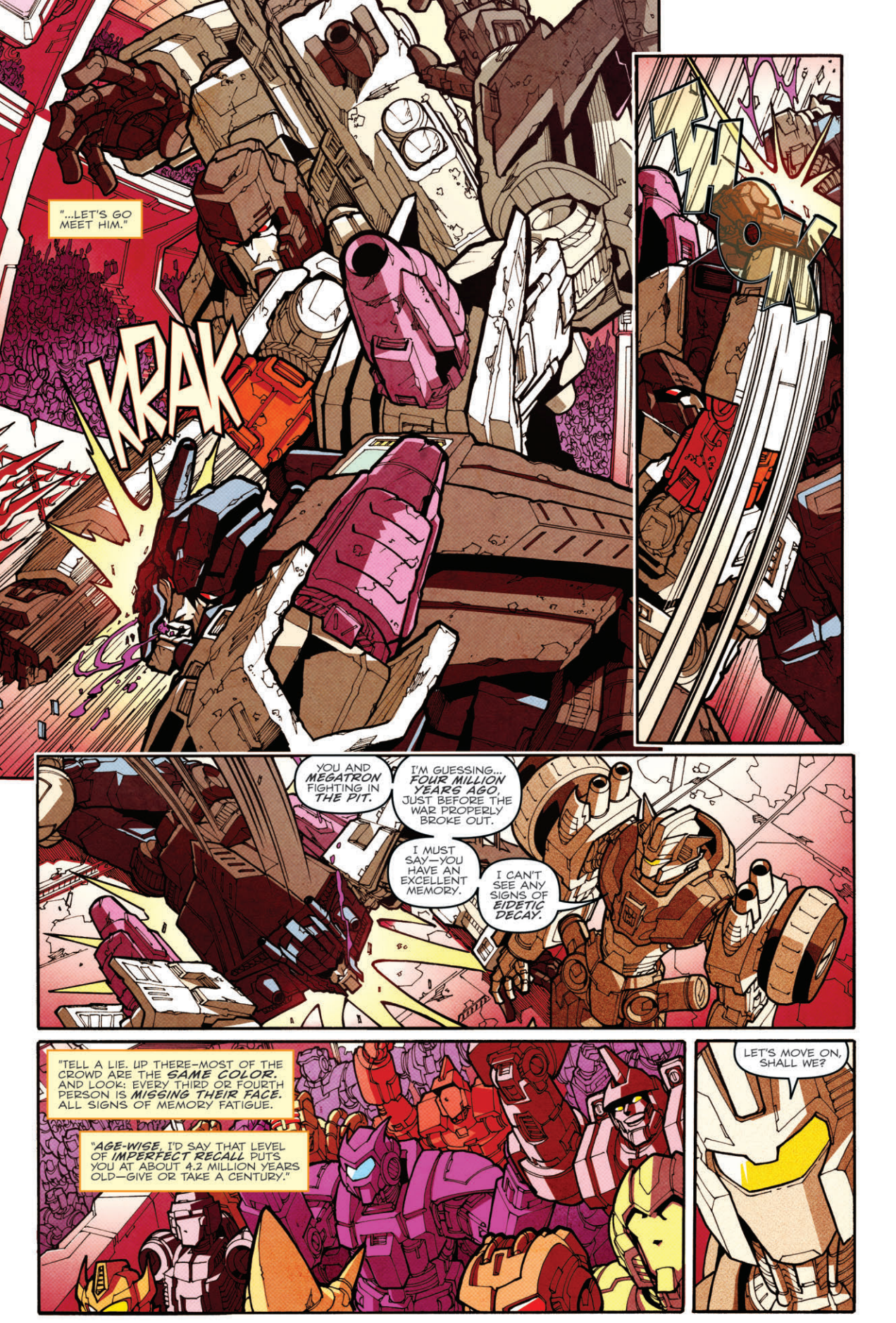
WE'RE THE ONES WHO FOUND YOUR POINT ONE WHATEVER— WHAT DO WE GET?
A DRILL WOULD BE NICE...
WERE YOU EXPOSED TO THE FIRST FLASH?
"EXPOSED"? UH... YEAH.

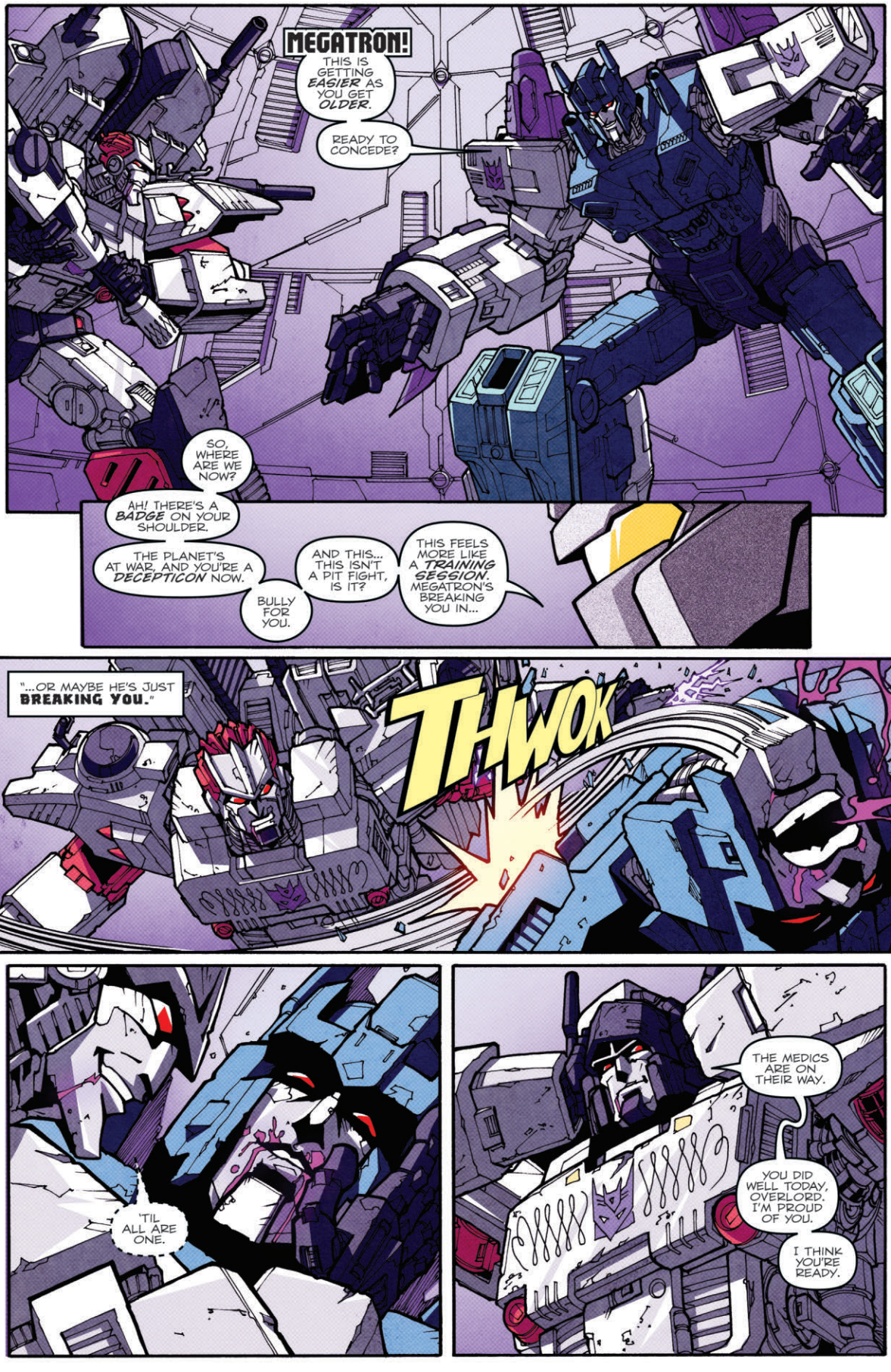
THEN YOU GET ABOUT SIX HOURS TO LIVE.
END PROLOGUE.

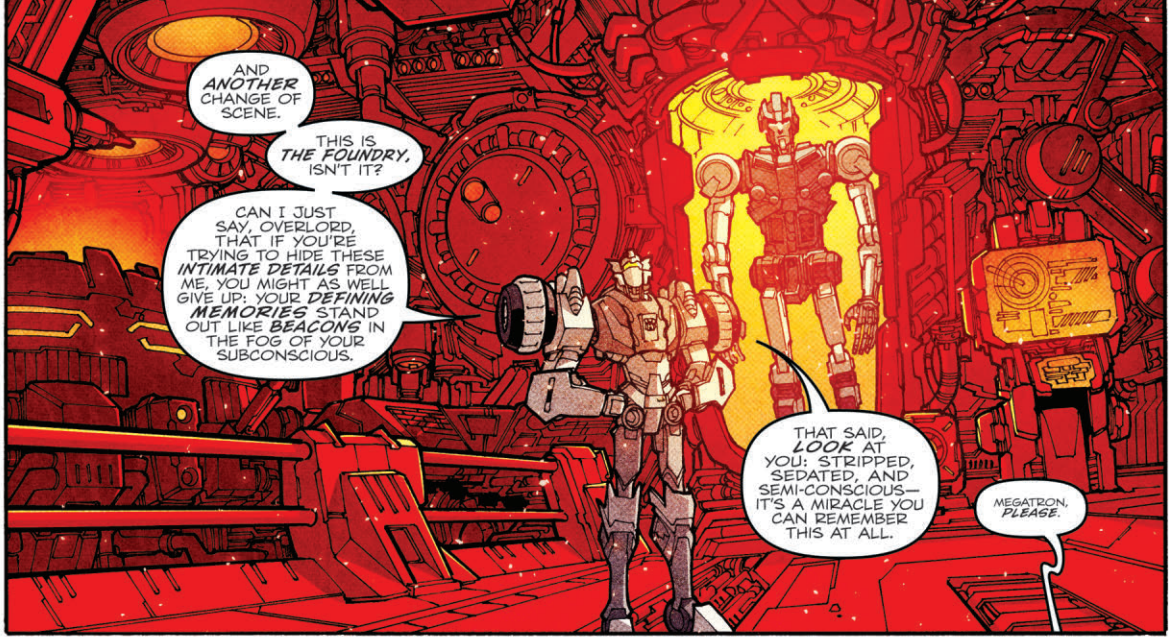
GARRUS 9, 4.2 MILLION YEARS LATER.
THOCK
HEY, OVERLORD! IT'S FISTS-IN-FACE TIME!
OUCH.
KRUNCH
MORE OF YOU?
HM?
OH, DON'T MIND ME—I'M JUST PASSING THROUGH. SORT OF AN INTERLOPER.
(I'M CHROMEDOME, BY THE WAY. WE'VE MET ONCE BEFORE. AGES AGO.)
NO, I'M JUST HERE FOR THE SMACKDOWN.
IN A MINUTE, SPRINGER—THE ONE YOU'RE THROTTLING—WILL SHOOT YOU FULL OF THESE EXPLOSIVE MICROCHIPS AND IRONFIST—YOU'VE NOT MET HIM YET—WILL LOOK AT YOU AND SAY...
ACTUALLY, YOU KNOW WHAT?


"LET'S SKIP STRAIGHT TO THAT BIT."
...RIGHT NOW, RIGHT THIS SECOND, THOUSANDS OF DETERRENCE CHIPS ARE LAYING DOWN ROOTS IN YOUR ENDOSKELETON.
SO?
YOU'VE NO MEANS OF DETONATING THEM.
WRONG. I'VE GOT THE WHOLE OF AEQUITAS IN MY HEAD, INCLUDING THE TRIGGER CODES.
AND NOW I'VE WORKED OUT HOW TO HONE THE SIGNAL AND LOCK ON TO A SPECIFIC TARGET. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS GIVE THE NOD AND...
BANG.
'TIL ALL ARE ONE.
KTCHA
KOOOM
GET OUT OF MY WAY!
TRY, "GET OUT OF MY HEAD."
OR, EVEN BETTER, "GET OUT OF MY MEMORIES."
IN FACT...
KLIK


THERE. BETTER?
'COURSE, THIS ISN'T REAL EITHER.
THIS IS WHAT RUNG WOULD CALL A BENIGN PSYCHIC ENVIRONMENT. YOU FLED HERE WHEN I FORGED A NEURAL PATHWAY INTO YOUR BRAIN.
IT'S LIKE A PANIC ROOM OF THE MIND—AND I JUST JIMMIED THE LOCK.
"IF YOU WERE TO LOOK OUTSIDE YOURSELF—WHICH YOU CAN'T—YOU'D SEE THINGS AS THEY REALLY WERE...
KUNK
"YOU, HELD IN PLACE BY A RESTRAINING HARNESS, LOCKED INSIDE A SLOW CELL UNDERNEATH AN AUTOBOT STARSHIP, MILLIONS OF MILES FROM ANYWHERE.
"AND ME, A MNEMOSURGEON RUMMAGING THROUGH YOUR MIND IN SEARCH OF SOMETHING VERY OLD AND VERY SPECIFIC."
KILL ME...
"WE REALLY HAVE MET BEFORE, YOU KNOW. JUST THAT ONE TIME. NO?"
KILL ME.
EVEN IF IT WAS WITHIN MY GIFT, KILLING YOU WOULD AMOUNT TO AN ACT OF MERCY YOU DON'T DESERVE.
BESIDES, I HAVEN'T FOUND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR YET, HAVE I?
BEST JUST RELAX AND LET ME WORK THROUGH YOUR BACKSTORY.
(DON'T WORRY—I WON'T INTRUDE. GARRUS 9 WAS ME ACCLIMATIZING; I'M NORMALLY VERY GOOD AT GOING UNNOTICED.)
"WHERE FIRST?" YOU CRY.
WELL, I'M GUESSING THAT A PHASE SIXER LIKE YOU—SOMEONE WITH THE DESTRUCTIVE CAPACITY TO SHAVE AN INCH OFF AN ENTIRE PLANET—I'M GUESSING THAT SOMEONE LIKE YOU IS HARD TO BEAT IN A FIGHT.
HM?
IN FACT, YOU CAN PROBABLY COUNT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BESTED YOU ON THE KNUCKLES OF ONE FIST.
I'D GO FURTHER. I WOULD!
I'D WAGER THAT, G9 ASIDE, EVERY DEFEAT YOU'VE SUFFERED HAS BEEN AT THE HANDS OF ONE PERSON...


"...LET'S GO MEET HIM."
KRAK
YOU AND MEGATRON FIGHTING IN THE PIT.
I'M GUESSING... FOUR MILLION YEARS AGO, JUST BEFORE THE WAR PROPERLY BROKE OUT.
I MUST SAY—YOU HAVE AN EXCELLENT MEMORY.
I CAN'T SEE ANY SIGNS OF EIDETIC DECAY.
"TELL A LIE. UP THERE—MOST OF THE CROWD ARE THE SAME COLOR. AND LOOK: EVERY THIRD OR FOURTH PERSON IS MISSING THEIR FACE. ALL SIGNS OF MEMORY FATIGUE.
"AGE-WISE, I'D SAY THAT LEVEL OF IMPERFECT RECALL PUTS YOU AT ABOUT 4.2 MILLION YEARS OLD—GIVE OR TAKE A CENTURY."
LET'S MOVE ON, SHALL WE?

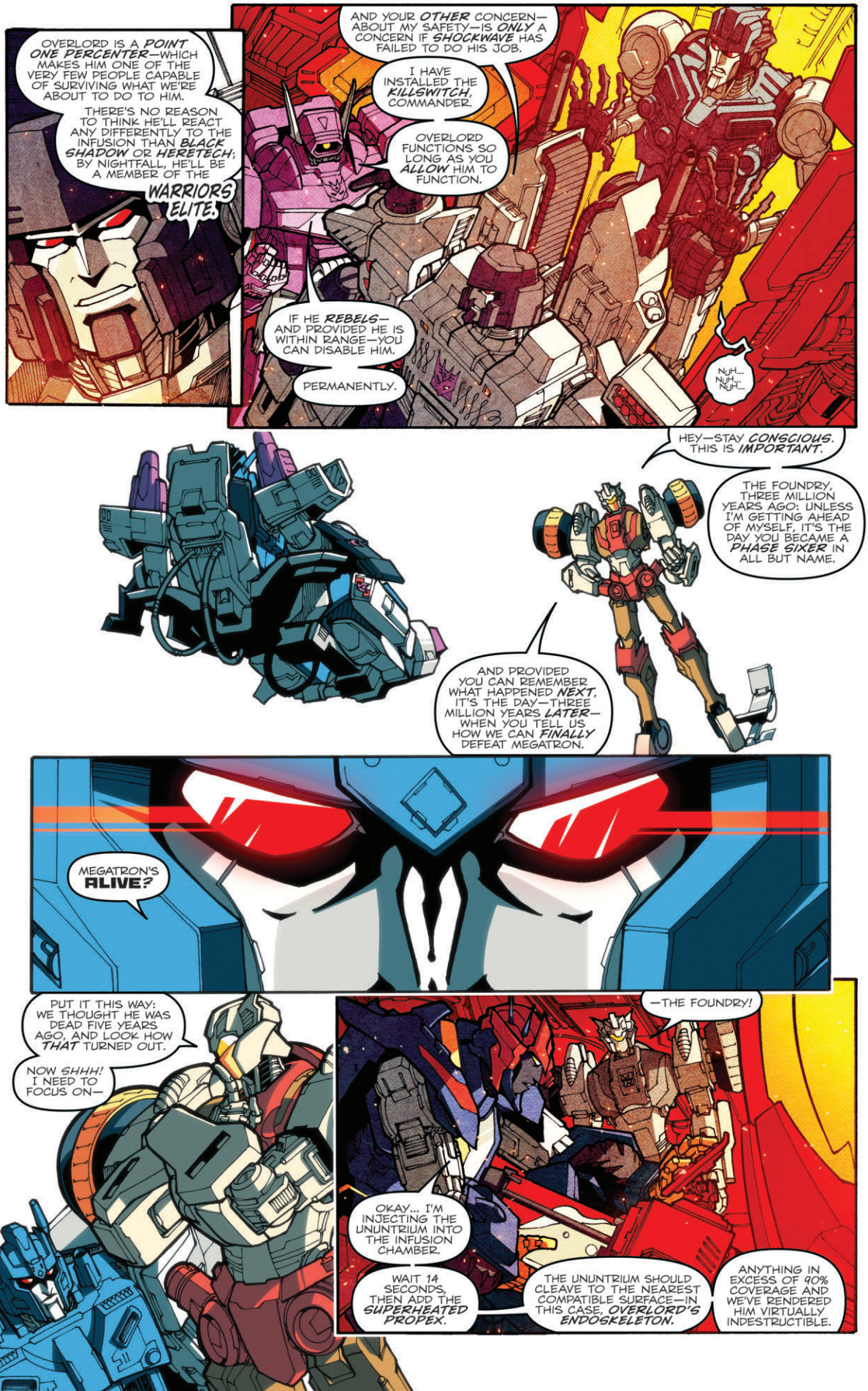

MEGATRON!
THIS IS GETTING EASIER AS YOU GET OLDER.
READY TO CONCEDE?
SO, WHERE ARE WE NOW?
AH! THERE'S A BADGE ON YOUR SHOULDER.
THE PLANET'S AT WAR, AND YOU'RE A DECEPTICON NOW.
BULLY FOR YOU.
AND THIS... THIS ISN'T A PIT FIGHT, IS IT?
THIS FEELS MORE LIKE A TRAINING SESSION. MEGATRON'S BREAKING YOU IN...
"...OR MAYBE HE'S JUST BREAKING YOU."
THWOK
'TIL ALL ARE ONE.
THE MEDICS ARE ON THEIR WAY.
YOU DID WELL TODAY, OVERLORD. I'M PROUD OF YOU.
I THINK YOU'RE READY.


AND ANOTHER CHANGE OF SCENE.
THIS IS THE FOUNDRY, ISN'T IT?
CAN I JUST SAY, OVERLORD, THAT IF YOU'RE TRYING TO HIDE THESE INTIMATE DETAILS FROM ME, YOU MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP: YOUR DEFINING MEMORIES STAND OUT LIKE BEACONS IN THE FOG OF YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS.
THAT SAID, LOOK AT YOU: STRIPPED, SEDATED, AND SEMI-CONSCIOUS— IT'S A MIRACLE YOU CAN REMEMBER THIS AT ALL.
MEGATRON, PLEASE.

I BEG YOU TO—
TO WHAT?
TO RESIST THE URGE TO CLAW YOUR SPARK OUT?
HOW DARE YOU QUESTION MY JUDGMENT, ROSSUM?
BUT— YOU HAVEN'T EVEN HEARD WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY!

YOU WERE GOING TO SAY THAT YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT WHAT WE'RE ABOUT TO DO.
YOU THINK THAT BECAUSE OVERLORD WAS BORN ON LUNA 2 AND NOT CYBERTRON, HE MIGHT REJECT THE INFUSION OF UNUNTRIUM.
THAT'S YOUR FIRST CONCERN.
YOUR SECOND CONCERN: YOU THINK THAT IF THE UNUNTRIUM DOES HAVE THE INTENDED EFFECT, HE MIGHT USE HIS NEWFOUND POWER TO USURP ME.

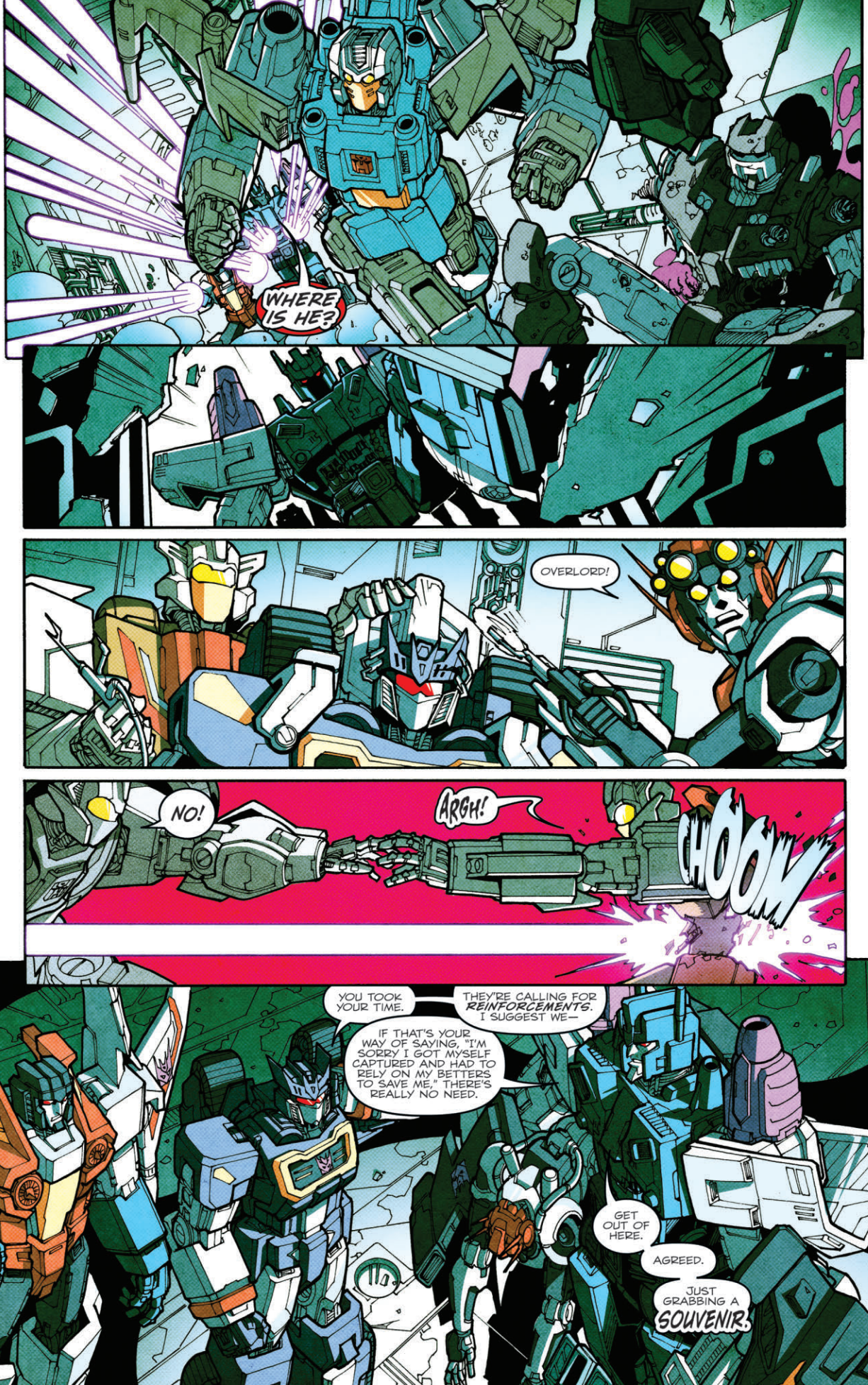
WELL? AM I RIGHT?
IN ALL PROBABILITY, THIS IS THE LAST UNUNTRIUM ON THE PLANET— AND THEREFORE THE LAST ANYWHERE.
I KNOW WE SAID THAT LAST TIME, WITH SIXSHOT, BUT... IT'S A MIRACLE THAT WE WERE ABLE TO FIND THIS.
I JUST DON'T WANT TO SEE IT WASTED.

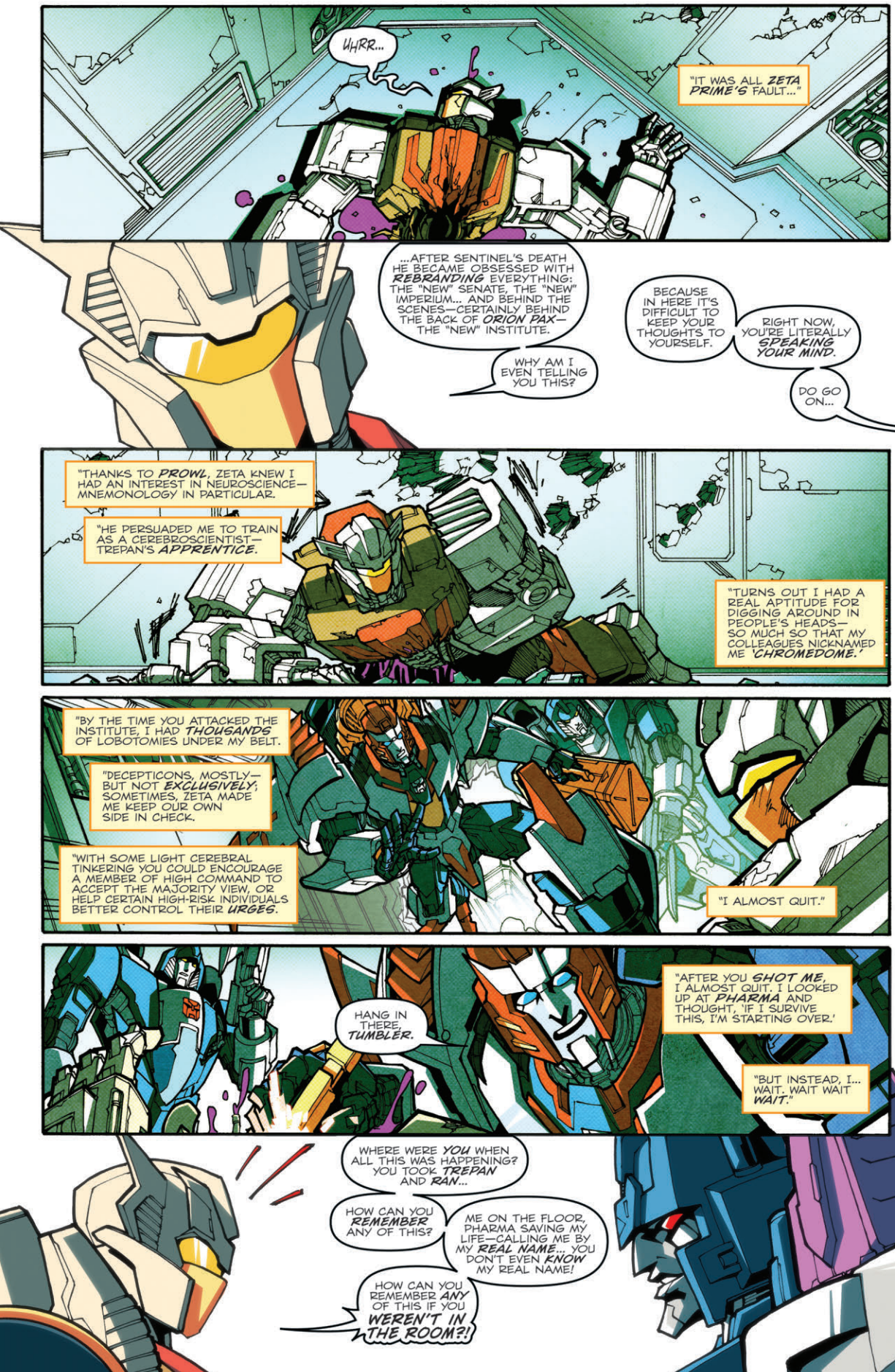

OVERLORD IS A POINT ONE PERCENTER—WHICH MAKES HIM ONE OF THE VERY FEW PEOPLE CAPABLE OF SURVIVING WHAT WE'RE ABOUT TO DO TO HIM.
THERE'S NO REASON TO THINK HE'LL REACT ANY DIFFERENTLY TO THE INFUSION THAN BLACK SHADOW OR HERETECH; BY NIGHTFALL, HE'LL BE A MEMBER OF THE WARRIORS ELITE.
AND YOUR OTHER CONCERN—ABOUT MY SAFETY—IS ONLY A CONCERN IF SHOCKWAVE HAS FAILED TO DO HIS JOB.
I HAVE INSTALLED THE KILLSWITCH, COMMANDER.
OVERLORD FUNCTIONS SO LONG AS YOU ALLOW HIM TO FUNCTION.
IF HE REBELS—AND PROVIDED HE IS WITHIN RANGE—YOU CAN DISABLE HIM.
PERMANENTLY.
NUH... NUH... NUH...
HEY—STAY CONSCIOUS. THIS IS IMPORTANT.
THE FOUNDRY, THREE MILLION YEARS AGO: UNLESS I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF, IT'S THE DAY YOU BECAME A PHASE SIXER IN ALL BUT NAME.
AND PROVIDED YOU CAN REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, IT'S THE DAY—THREE MILLION YEARS LATER—WHEN YOU TELL US HOW WE CAN FINALLY DEFEAT MEGATRON.
MEGATRON'S ALIVE?
PUT IT THIS WAY: WE THOUGHT HE WAS DEAD FIVE YEARS AGO, AND LOOK HOW THAT TURNED OUT.
NOW SHHH! I NEED TO FOCUS ON—
—THE FOUNDRY!
OKAY... I'M INJECTING THE UNUNTRIUM INTO THE INFUSION CHAMBER.
WAIT 14 SECONDS, THEN ADD THE SUPERHEATED PROPEX.
THE UNUNTRIUM SHOULD CLEAVE TO THE NEAREST COMPATIBLE SURFACE—IN THIS CASE, OVERLORD'S ENDOSKELETON.
ANYTHING IN EXCESS OF 90% COVERAGE AND WE'VE RENDERED HIM VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE.

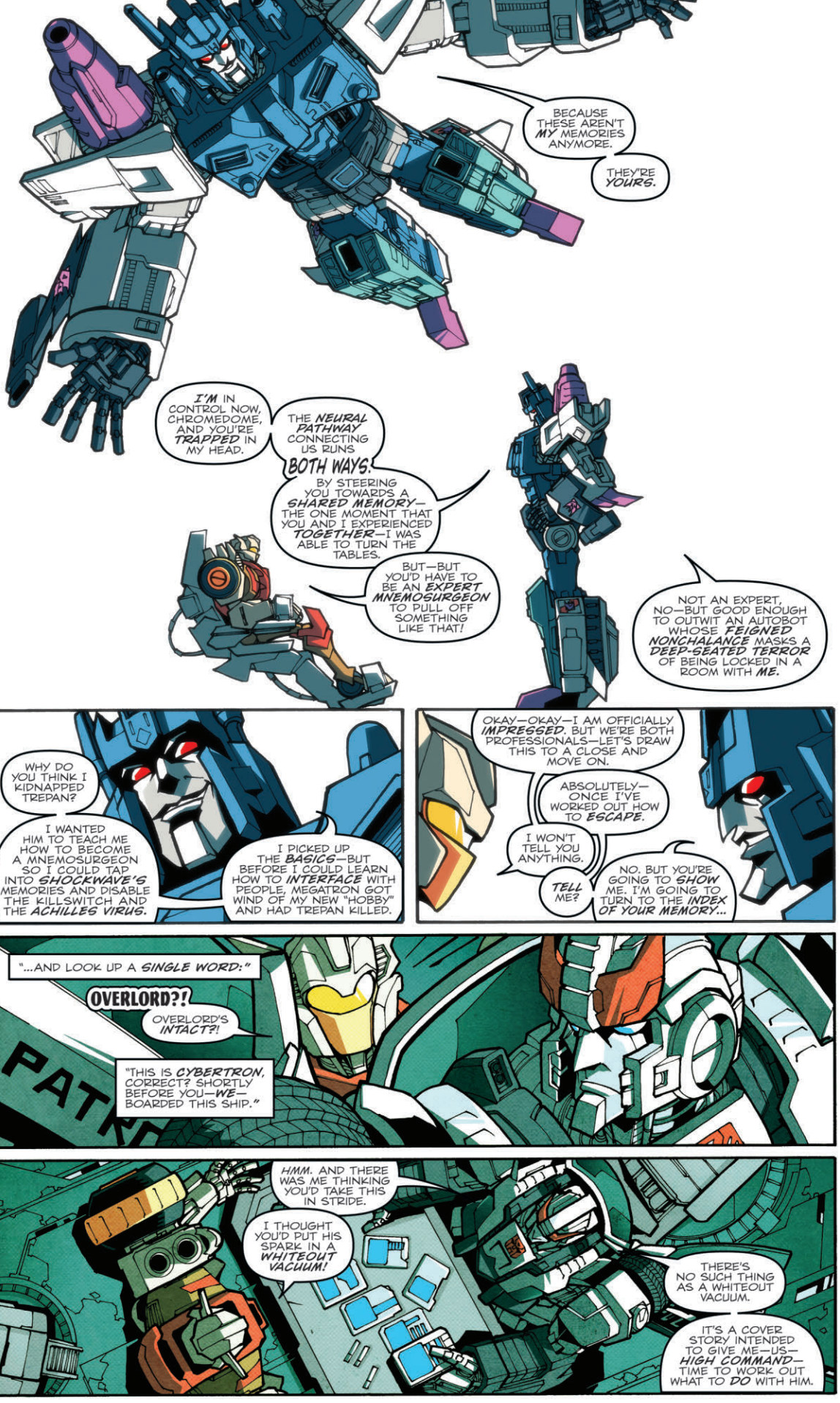
DONE.
GOOD.
NOW, WHEN THE SECOND SKIN STARTS TO CONGEAL, INCREASE THE TEMPERATURE BY 300 DEGREES, THEN KEEP PUSHING IT HIGHER—SLOWLY—UNTIL OVERLORD'S EYES TURN WHITE: IT MEANS HIS SPARK HAS TAKEN AS MUCH AS IT CAN TAKE.
OKAY—NOW PUSH!
PUSH!
KEEP PUSHING...
AND... WE'RE GOOD!
LIFE SIGNS ARE HOLDING STEADY.
HE'S GOING TO BE FINE.
CONGRATULATIONS, MEGATRON—
IT'S A SUPERWARRIOR.
URK!
TISH
PUNCH
HE TAKES AFTER ME.

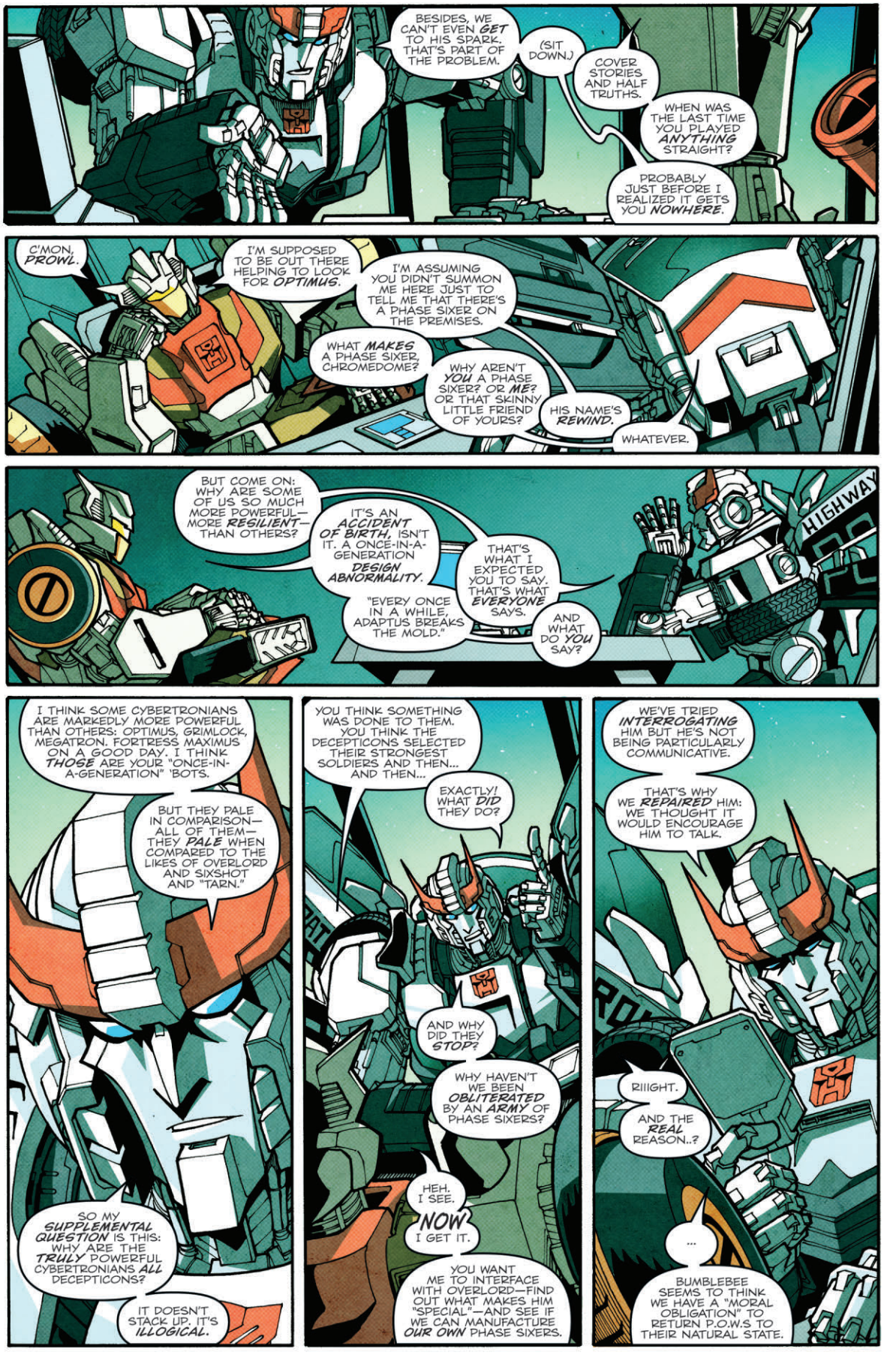
WELL, I DON'T GET TO SAY IT OFTEN, BUT: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.
YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT HOST, OVERLORD—VERY ACCOMMODATING. ALL THAT REMAINS IS FOR ME TO PULL OUT AND—
WHY ARE YOU SMILING?
SMILING? OH, NOTHING REALLY.
"I'VE JUST REMEMBERED WHERE I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE..."
FAR BE IT FROM ME TO QUESTION THE QUALITY OF DECEPTICON INTELLIGENCE, OVERLORD, BUT WE APPEAR TO HAVE FLOWN HALFWAY ACROSS CYBERTRON TO CARPET BOMB A PATCH OF WASTELAND.
AT LEAST IT'S GIVEN YOU TIME TO PERFECT YOUR WITHERING TONE, STARSCREAM.
IN ANY CASE, YOU'RE WRONG AND THE DECEPTICON SECRET SERVICE IS RIGHT.
THIS IS CLEARLY AN AUTOBOT HIDEOUT...
"...LOOK WHO'S JUST ANSWERED THE DOOR."
GUARDIAN DROIDS...
FROM

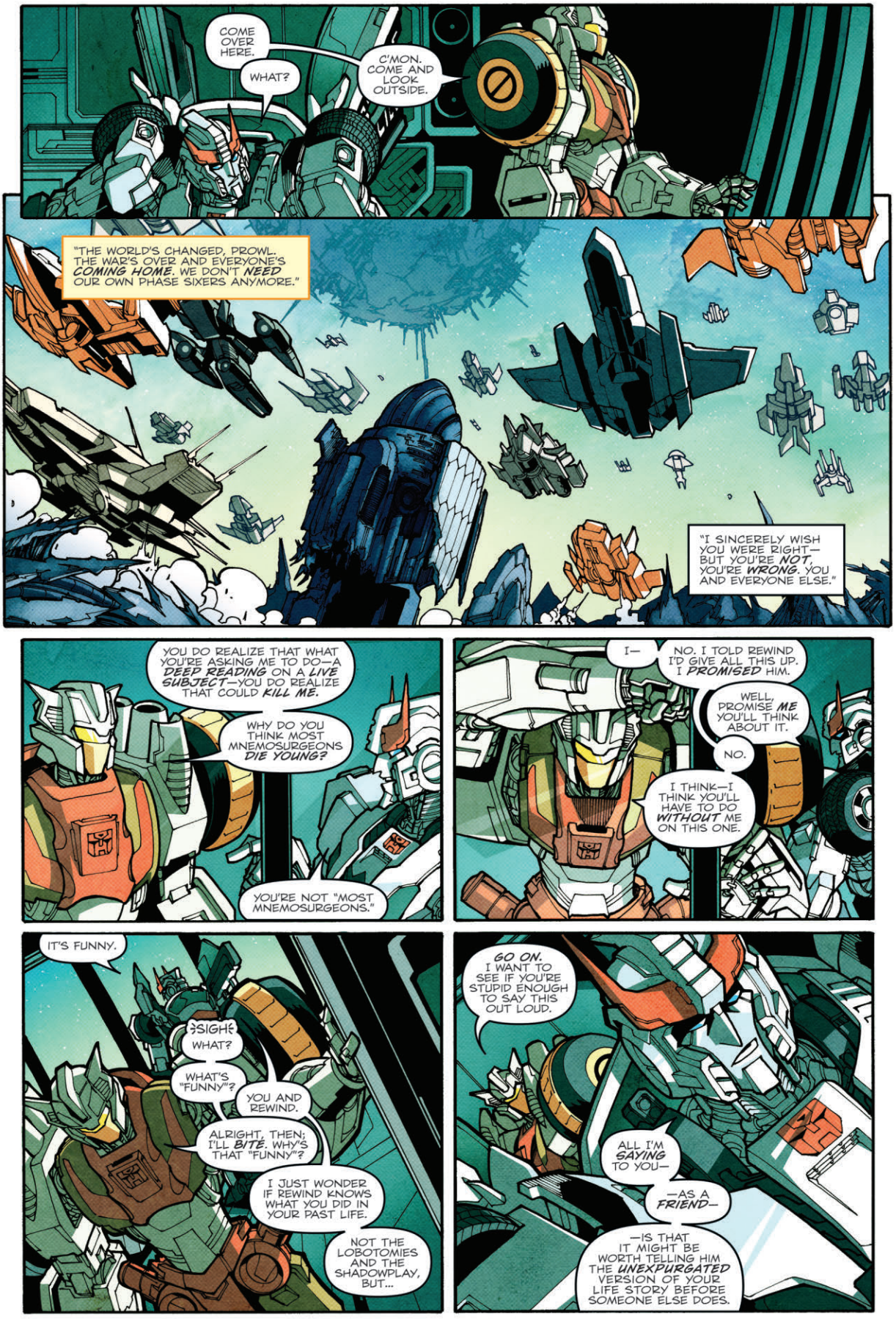
...AND UNLESS THEY HAVE TAKEN TO PROTECTING SITES OF STRATEGIC INSIGNIFICANCE...
K-CHOOM
K-CHOOM
...I'D SAY WE'VE JUST FOUND THE FABLED NEW INSTITUTE.
WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
WHY THIS MEMORY?
OVERLORD?
STOP SMILING! WHY ARE WE—
OVERLORD!
WHY ARE WE AT THE INSTITUTE?


WHERE IS HE?
OVERLORD!
NO!
ARGH!
HOOM
YOU TOOK YOUR TIME.
THEY'RE CALLING FOR REINFORCEMENTS. I SUGGEST WE—
IF THAT'S YOUR WAY OF SAYING, "I'M SORRY I GOT MYSELF CAPTURED AND HAD TO RELY ON MY BETTERS TO SAVE ME," THERE'S REALLY NO NEED.
GET OUT OF HERE.
AGREED.
JUST GRABBING A SOUVENIR.


UHRR...
"IT WAS ALL ZETA PRIME'S FAULT..."
...AFTER SENTINEL'S DEATH HE BECAME OBSESSED WITH REBRANDING EVERYTHING: THE "NEW" SENATE, THE "NEW" IMPERIUM... AND BEHIND THE SCENES—CERTAINLY BEHIND THE BACK OF ORION PAX—THE "NEW" INSTITUTE.
WHY AM I EVEN TELLING YOU THIS?
BECAUSE IN HERE IT'S DIFFICULT TO KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS TO YOURSELF.
RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE LITERALLY SPEAKING YOUR MIND.
DO GO ON...
"THANKS TO PROWL, ZETA KNEW I HAD AN INTEREST IN NEUROSCIENCE—MNEMONOLOGY IN PARTICULAR.
"HE PERSUADED ME TO TRAIN AS A CEREBROSCIENTIST—TREPAN'S APPRENTICE.
"TURNS OUT I HAD A REAL APTITUDE FOR DIGGING AROUND IN PEOPLE'S HEADS—SO MUCH SO THAT MY COLLEAGUES NICKNAMED ME 'CHROMEDOME.'
"BY THE TIME YOU ATTACKED THE INSTITUTE, I HAD THOUSANDS OF LOBOTOMIES UNDER MY BELT.
"DECEPTICONS, MOSTLY—BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY; SOMETIMES, ZETA MADE ME KEEP OUR OWN SIDE IN CHECK.
"WITH SOME LIGHT CEREBRAL TINKERING YOU COULD ENCOURAGE A MEMBER OF HIGH COMMAND TO ACCEPT THE MAJORITY VIEW, OR HELP CERTAIN HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS BETTER CONTROL THEIR URGES.
"I ALMOST QUIT."
HANG IN THERE, TUMBLER.
"AFTER YOU SHOT ME, I ALMOST QUIT. I LOOKED UP AT PHARMA AND THOUGHT, 'IF I SURVIVE THIS, I'M STARTING OVER.'
"BUT INSTEAD, I... WAIT. WAIT WAIT WAIT."
WHERE WERE YOU WHEN ALL THIS WAS HAPPENING? YOU TOOK TREPAN AND RAN...
HOW CAN YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THIS?
ME ON THE FLOOR, PHARMA SAVING MY LIFE—CALLING ME BY MY REAL NAME... YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW MY REAL NAME!
HOW CAN YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THIS IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE ROOM?!


BECAUSE THESE AREN'T MY MEMORIES ANYMORE.
THEY'RE YOURS.
I'M IN CONTROL NOW, CHROMEDOME, AND YOU'RE TRAPPED IN MY HEAD.
THE NEURAL PATHWAY CONNECTING US RUNS BOTH WAYS.
BY STEERING YOU TOWARDS A SHARED MEMORY—THE ONE MOMENT THAT YOU AND I EXPERIENCED TOGETHER—I WAS ABLE TO TURN THE TABLES.
BUT—BUT YOU'D HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT MNEMOSURGEON TO PULL OFF SOMETHING LIKE THAT!
NOT AN EXPERT, NO—BUT GOOD ENOUGH TO OUTWIT AN AUTOBOT WHOSE FEIGNED NONCHALANCE MASKS A DEEP-SEATED TERROR OF BEING LOCKED IN A ROOM WITH ME.
WHY DO YOU THINK I KIDNAPPED TREPAN?
I WANTED HIM TO TEACH ME HOW TO BECOME A MNEMOSURGEON SO I COULD TAP INTO SHOCKWAVE'S MEMORIES AND DISABLE THE KILLSWITCH AND THE ACHILLES VIRUS.
I PICKED UP THE BASICS—BUT BEFORE I COULD LEARN HOW TO INTERFACE WITH PEOPLE, MEGATRON GOT WIND OF MY NEW "HOBBY" AND HAD TREPAN KILLED.
OKAY—OKAY—I AM OFFICIALLY IMPRESSED. BUT WE'RE BOTH PROFESSIONALS—LET'S DRAW THIS TO A CLOSE AND MOVE ON.
ABSOLUTELY—ONCE I'VE WORKED OUT HOW TO ESCAPE.
I WON'T TELL YOU ANYTHING.
TELL ME?
NO. BUT YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW ME. I'M GOING TO TURN TO THE INDEX OF YOUR MEMORY...
"...AND LOOK UP A SINGLE WORD:"
OVERLORD?!
OVERLORD'S INTACT?!
"THIS IS CYBERTRON, CORRECT? SHORTLY BEFORE YOU—WE—BOARDED THIS SHIP."
HMM. AND THERE WAS ME THINKING YOU'D TAKE THIS IN STRIDE.
I THOUGHT YOU'D PUT HIS SPARK IN A WHITEOUT VACUUM!
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A WHITEOUT VACUUM.
IT'S A COVER STORY INTENDED TO GIVE ME—US—HIGH COMMAND—TIME TO WORK OUT WHAT TO DO WITH HIM.


BESIDES, WE CAN'T EVEN GET TO HIS SPARK. THAT'S PART OF THE PROBLEM.
(SIT DOWN.)
COVER STORIES AND HALF TRUTHS.
WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU PLAYED ANYTHING STRAIGHT?
PROBABLY JUST BEFORE I REALIZED IT GETS YOU NOWHERE.
C'MON, PROWL.
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE OUT THERE HELPING TO LOOK FOR OPTIMUS.
I'M ASSUMING YOU DIDN'T SUMMON ME HERE JUST TO TELL ME THAT THERE'S A PHASE SIXER ON THE PREMISES.
WHAT MAKES A PHASE SIXER, CHROMEDOME?
WHY AREN'T YOU A PHASE SIXER? OR ME? OR THAT SKINNY LITTLE FRIEND OF YOURS?
HIS NAME'S REWIND.
WHATEVER.
BUT COME ON: WHY ARE SOME OF US SO MUCH MORE POWERFUL—MORE RESILIENT—THAN OTHERS?
IT'S AN ACCIDENT OF BIRTH, ISN'T IT. A ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION DESIGN ABNORMALITY.
"EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, ADAPTUS BREAKS THE MOLD."
THAT'S WHAT I EXPECTED YOU TO SAY. THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE SAYS.
AND WHAT DO YOU SAY?
HIGHWAY
I THINK SOME CYBERTRONIANS ARE MARKEDLY MORE POWERFUL THAN OTHERS: OPTIMUS, GRIMLOCK, MEGATRON, FORTRESS MAXIMUS ON A GOOD DAY. I THINK THOSE ARE YOUR "ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION" 'BOTS.
BUT THEY PALE IN COMPARISON—ALL OF THEM—THEY PALE WHEN COMPARED TO THE LIKES OF OVERLORD AND SIXSHOT AND "TARN."
SO MY SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION IS THIS: WHY ARE THE TRULY POWERFUL CYBERTRONIANS ALL DECEPTICONS?
IT DOESN'T STACK UP. IT'S ILLOGICAL.
YOU THINK SOMETHING WAS DONE TO THEM. YOU THINK THE DECEPTICONS SELECTED THEIR STRONGEST SOLDIERS AND THEN... AND THEN...
EXACTLY! WHAT DID THEY DO?
AND WHY DID THEY STOP?
WHY HAVEN'T WE BEEN OBLITERATED BY AN ARMY OF PHASE SIXERS?
HEH. I SEE.
NOW I GET IT.
YOU WANT ME TO INTERFACE WITH OVERLORD—FIND OUT WHAT MAKES HIM "SPECIAL"—AND SEE IF WE CAN MANUFACTURE OUR OWN PHASE SIXERS.
WE'VE TRIED INTERROGATING HIM BUT HE'S NOT BEING PARTICULARLY COMMUNICATIVE.
THAT'S WHY WE REPAIRED HIM: WE THOUGHT IT WOULD ENCOURAGE HIM TO TALK.
RIIIGHT.
AND THE REAL REASON..?
...
BUMBLEBEE SEEMS TO THINK WE HAVE A "MORAL OBLIGATION" TO RETURN P.O.W.S TO THEIR NATURAL STATE.


COME OVER HERE.
WHAT?
C'MON. COME AND LOOK OUTSIDE.
"THE WORLD'S CHANGED, PROWL. THE WAR'S OVER AND EVERYONE'S COMING HOME. WE DON'T NEED OUR OWN PHASE SIXERS ANYMORE."
"I SINCERELY WISH YOU WERE RIGHT— BUT YOU'RE NOT, YOU'RE WRONG. YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE."
YOU DO REALIZE THAT WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME TO DO—A DEEP READING ON A LIVE SUBJECT—YOU DO REALIZE THAT COULD KILL ME.
WHY DO YOU THINK MOST MNEMOSURGEONS DIE YOUNG?
YOU'RE NOT "MOST MNEMOSURGEONS."
I—
NO. I TOLD REWIND I'D GIVE ALL THIS UP. I PROMISED HIM.
WELL, PROMISE ME YOU'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
NO.
I THINK—I THINK YOU'LL HAVE TO DO WITHOUT ME ON THIS ONE.
IT'S FUNNY.
SIGH
WHAT?
WHAT'S "FUNNY"?
YOU AND REWIND.
ALRIGHT, THEN; I'LL BITE. WHY'S THAT "FUNNY"?
I JUST WONDER IF REWIND KNOWS WHAT YOU DID IN YOUR PAST LIFE.
NOT THE LOBOTOMIES AND THE SHADOWPLAY, BUT...
GO ON. I WANT TO SEE IF YOU'RE STUPID ENOUGH TO SAY THIS OUT LOUD.
ALL I'M SAYING TO YOU—
—AS A FRIEND—
—IS THAT IT MIGHT BE WORTH TELLING HIM THE UNEXPURGATED VERSION OF YOUR LIFE STORY BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE DOES.

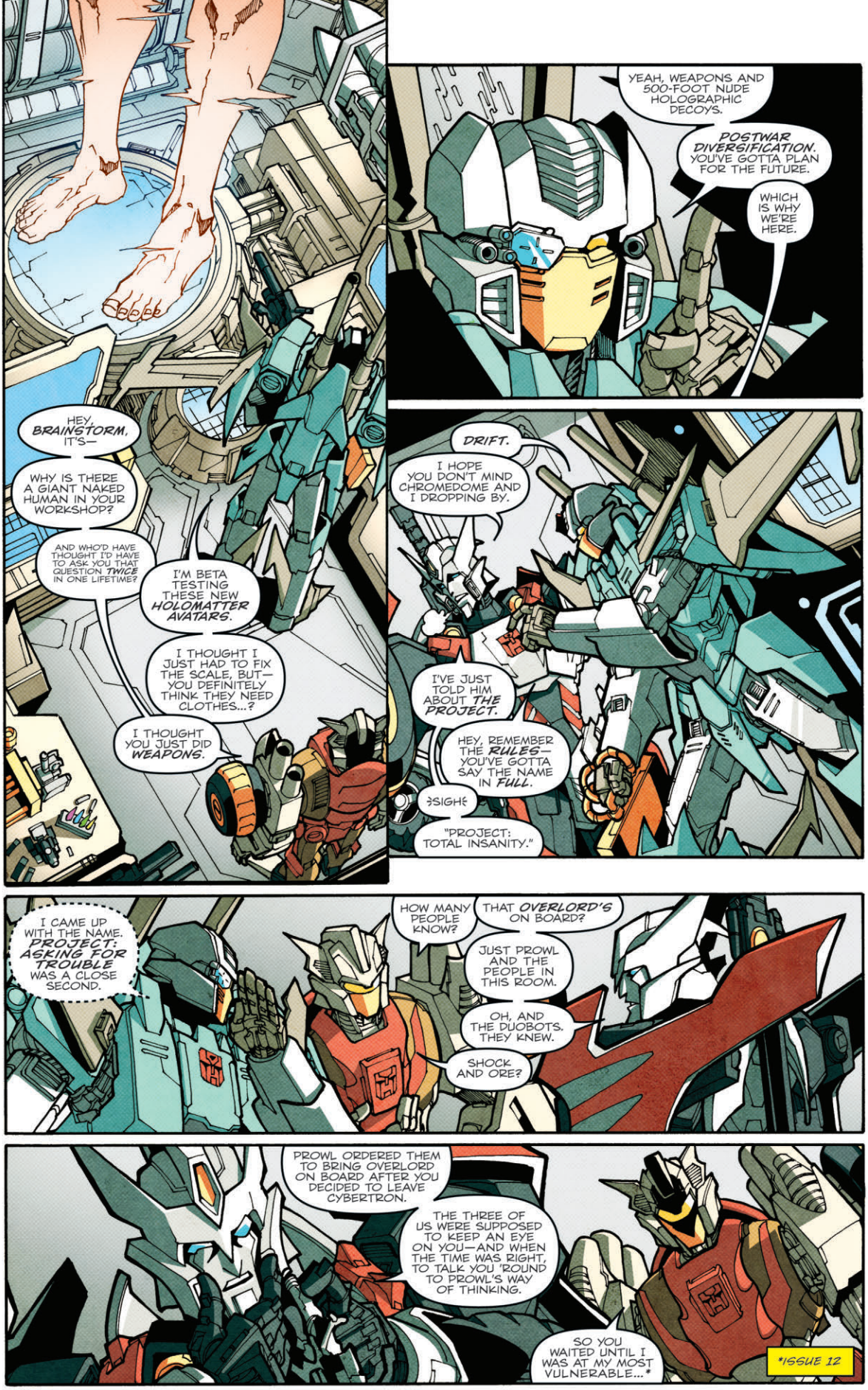
NOW, IF YOU AND I WERE TO COME TO AN *ARRANGEMENT* WHEREBY—
HIGHWAY PA
SLIKT

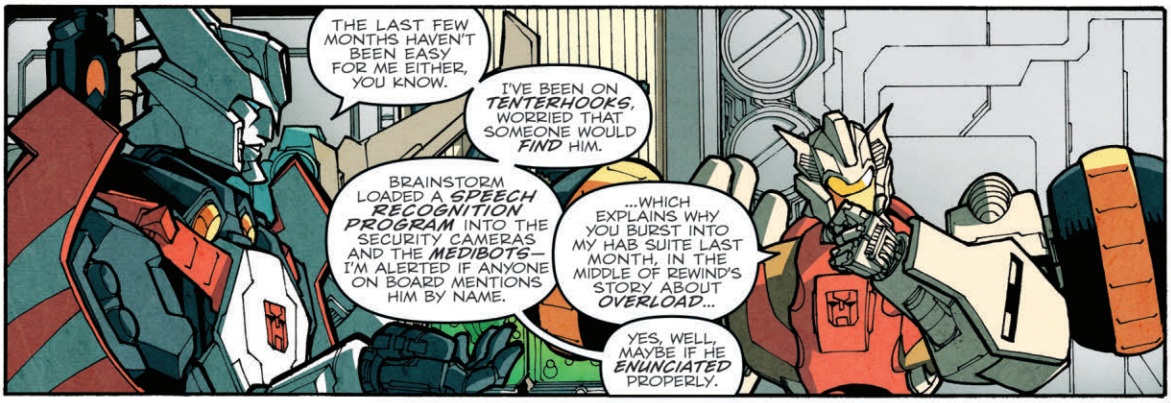
YOU ASKED FOR THIS.
NO!

I'M *IMPRESSED.*
WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU DO TO HIM?

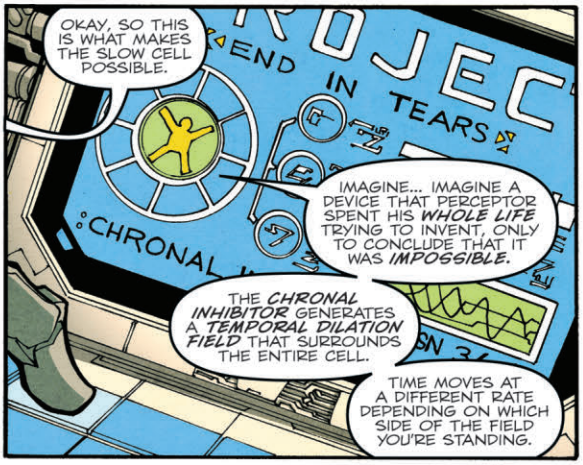
I REMOVED HIS MEMORY OF MAKING THE *THREAT*—THEN I REMOVED THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ALLOWED HIM TO *MAKE* THE THREAT IN THE FIRST PLACE.
IT WAS A *RUSH JOB.* I WAS CONSCIOUS THAT THE DOOR WAS OPEN.
ONCE I WAS SURE HE WOULDN'T REMEMBER ME *ATTACKING* HIM, I PULLED OUT.

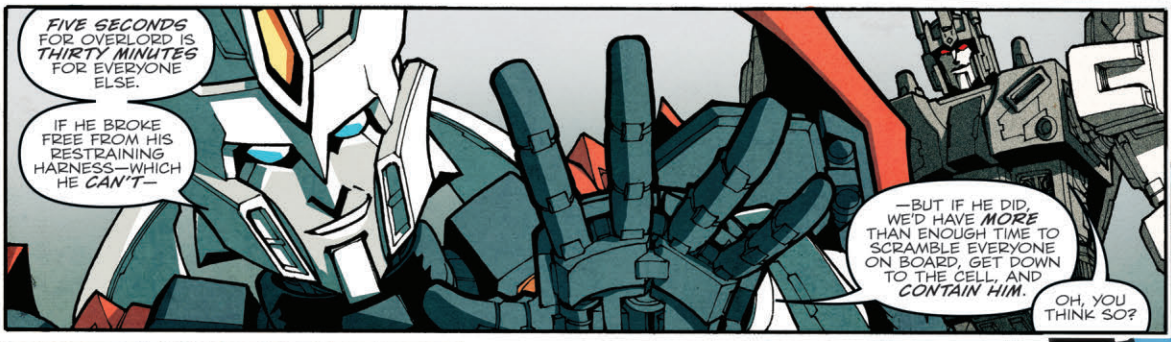
SO YOU'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
YEAH.
WHATEVER.
"I THINK WE'VE BOTH SEEN ENOUGH NOW, OVERLORD. LET'S—LET'S *WRAP THIS UP*, EH?"
"NO. I'M GETTING THE HANG OF THIS. I'M GETTING THE HANG OF *YOU*. AND I THINK I'VE FOUND THE MEMORY I'M AFTER..."


HEY, BRAINSTORM, IT'S—
WHY IS THERE A GIANT NAKED HUMAN IN YOUR WORKSHOP?
AND WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT I'D HAVE TO ASK YOU THAT QUESTION TWICE IN ONE LIFETIME?
I'M BETA TESTING THESE NEW HOLOMATTER AVATARS.
I THOUGHT I JUST HAD TO FIX THE SCALE, BUT—YOU DEFINITELY THINK THEY NEED CLOTHES...?
I THOUGHT YOU JUST DID WEAPONS.
YEAH, WEAPONS AND 500-FOOT NUDE HOLOGRAPHIC DECOYS.
POSTWAR DIVERSIFICATION. YOU'VE GOTTA PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.
WHICH IS WHY WE'RE HERE.
DRIFT.
I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND CHROMEDOME AND I DROPPING BY.
I'VE JUST TOLD HIM ABOUT THE PROJECT.
HEY, REMEMBER THE RULES—YOU'VE GOTTA SAY THE NAME IN FULL.
:SIGH:
"PROJECT: TOTAL INSANITY."
I CAME UP WITH THE NAME. PROJECT: ASKING FOR TROUBLE WAS A CLOSE SECOND.
HOW MANY PEOPLE KNOW?
THAT OVERLORD'S ON BOARD?
JUST PROWL AND THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM.
OH, AND THE DUOBOTS. THEY KNEW.
SHOCK AND ORE?
PROWL ORDERED THEM TO BRING OVERLORD ON BOARD AFTER YOU DECIDED TO LEAVE CYBERTRON.
THE THREE OF US WERE SUPPOSED TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU—AND WHEN THE TIME WAS RIGHT, TO TALK YOU 'ROUND TO PROWL'S WAY OF THINKING.
SO YOU WAITED UNTIL I WAS AT MY MOST VULNERABLE...*
*ISSUE 12


THE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVEN'T BEEN EASY FOR ME EITHER, YOU KNOW.
I'VE BEEN ON TENTERHOOKS, WORRIED THAT SOMEONE WOULD FIND HIM.
BRAINSTORM LOADED A SPEECH RECOGNITION PROGRAM INTO THE SECURITY CAMERAS AND THE MEDIBOTS—I'M ALERTED IF ANYONE ON BOARD MENTIONS HIM BY NAME.
...WHICH EXPLAINS WHY YOU BURST INTO MY HAB SUITE LAST MONTH, IN THE MIDDLE OF REWIND'S STORY ABOUT OVERLOAD...
YES, WELL, MAYBE IF HE ENUNCIATED PROPERLY.

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
MAKE UP A SECRET HANDSHAKE?
I THOUGHT YOU COULD TELL CHROMEDOME HOW THE SLOW CELL WORKS.
I WANT TO REASSURE HIM THAT WE'VE GOT EVERYTHING COVERED, SECURITY-WISE, BEFORE HE PAYS HIS FIRST VISIT TO OVERLORD.


OKAY, SO THIS IS WHAT MAKES THE SLOW CELL POSSIBLE.
IMAGINE... IMAGINE A DEVICE THAT PERCEPTOR SPENT HIS WHOLE LIFE TRYING TO INVENT, ONLY TO CONCLUDE THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE.
THE CHRONAL INHIBITOR GENERATES A TEMPORAL DILATION FIELD THAT SURROUNDS THE ENTIRE CELL.
TIME MOVES AT A DIFFERENT RATE DEPENDING ON WHICH SIDE OF THE FIELD YOU'RE STANDING.


FIVE SECONDS FOR OVERLORD IS THIRTY MINUTES FOR EVERYONE ELSE.
IF HE BROKE FREE FROM HIS RESTRAINING HARNESS—WHICH HE CAN'T—
—BUT IF HE DID, WE'D HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME TO SCRAMBLE EVERYONE ON BOARD, GET DOWN TO THE CELL, AND CONTAIN HIM.
OH, YOU THINK SO?

I ADMIRE YOU FOR DOING THIS, CHROMEDOME.
WELL IT'S LIKE YOU SAID: THE DECEPTICONS COULD RESURFACE AT ANY TIME.
IF MEGATRON RETURNS—IF PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT ARE GOING TO BE PUT AT RISK—I HAVE TO DO ALL I CAN TO HELP US PREPARE.
IN THAT CASE, BRAINSTORM JUST NEEDS TO SHOW YOU THE SECURITY CODE SO YOU CAN GET IN AND OUT OF THE CELL.

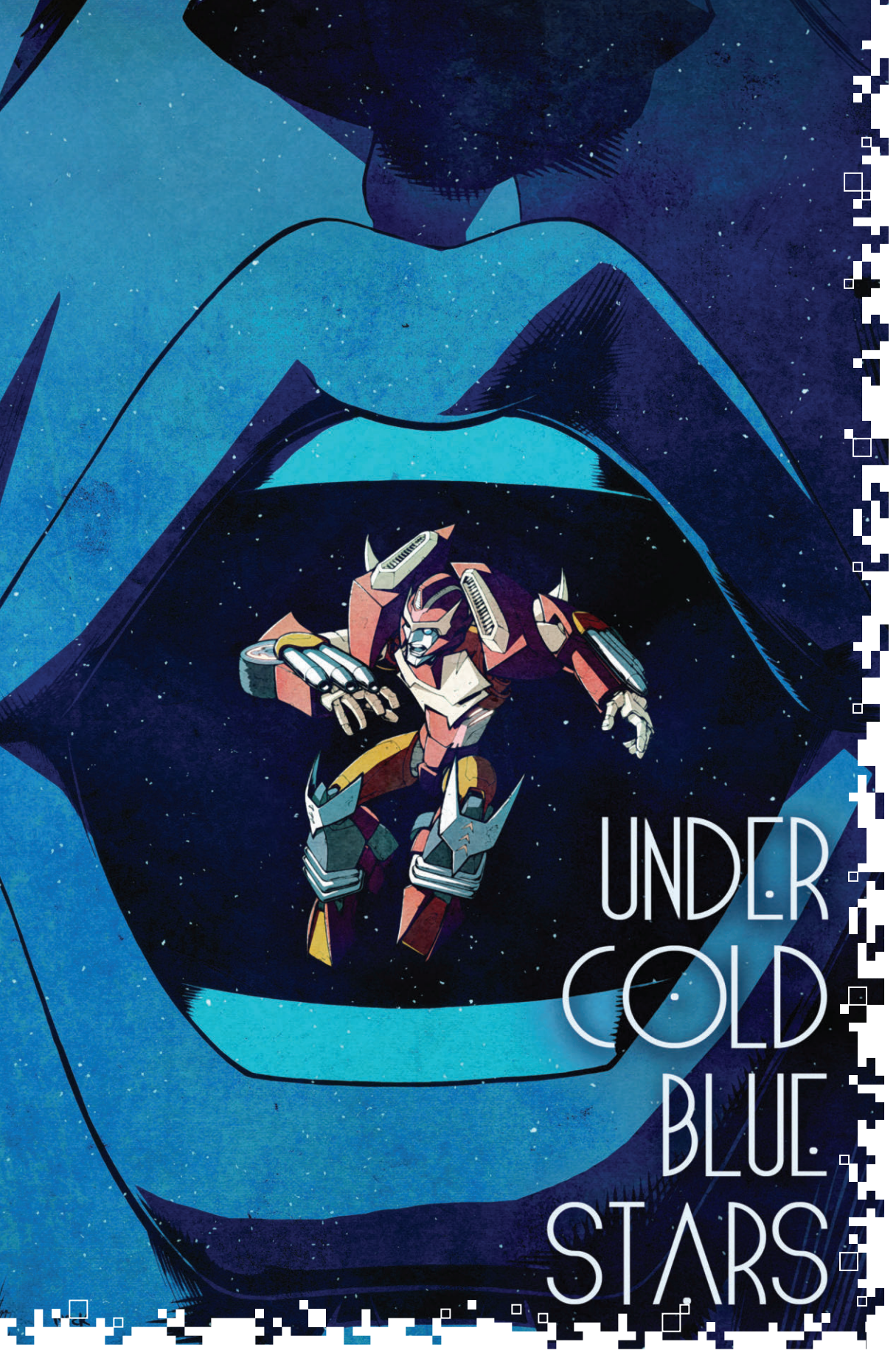
DON'T SHOW ME DON'T SHOW ME DON'T SHOW ME
AND YET WE BOTH KNOW HE DOES.

YOU NEED TO MEMORIZE THIS, CHROMEDOME.
THIS IS THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN GET INTO THE CELL.
AND THE ONLY WAY I CAN GET OUT.
BRAWN

BREAKING FREE OF THESE PAPER CHAINS WAS NEVER A PROBLEM—I JUST LACKED THE MOTIVATION.
BUT IF MEGATRON'S ALIVE, THEN THERE'S EVERYTHING TO PLAY FOR.
...
DON'T WORRY: YOU'LL FIND YOUR VOICE—AND YOUR LEGS—SOON ENOUGH.
YOU KNOW THE SIDE EFFECTS OF A PROLONGED DEEP READING BETTER THAN I DO.
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S STRANGE, THOUGH: NO GUARDS, NO LAST-MINUTE INTERVENTIONS, NO HEROIC AUTOBOTS RUSHING TO YOUR AID.
YOU DID TELL THEM YOU WERE COMING, DIDN'T YOU?
NOW IF YOU DON'T MIND, I THINK I'LL HEAD UPSTAIRS AND KILL EVERYONE ON THIS SHIP—STARTING WITH THAT SKINNY LITTLE FRIEND OF YOURS.
TEMPORAL DILATION FIELD
ISABL
YOU'RE WELCOME TO FOLLOW ME AND RAISE THE ALARM.
I WON'T HURT YOU OR RESTRAIN YOU OR PUT ANY OBSTACLES IN YOUR WAY.
WHAT I WILL DO IS CLOSE THIS DOOR BEHIND ME, REACTIVATING THE TEMPORAL DILATION FIELD.
AND YOU? ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS CROSS THE FLOOR AND OPEN IT.
IT SHOULD TAKE YOU—OOOH—FIVE SECONDS?
FIVE SECONDS YOUR TIME.
FROM MY PERSPECTIVE—AND FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EVERYONE ELSE ON BOARD—IT MIGHT AS WELL BE FIVE YEARS.
RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN, CHROMEDOME...
...YOU'RE ALREADY TOO LATE.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #14 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**



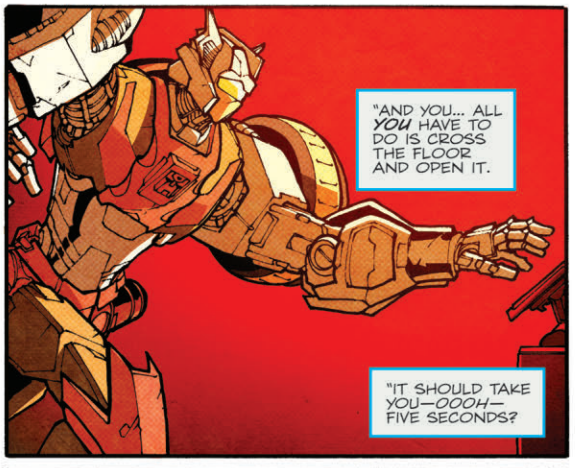

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #15 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

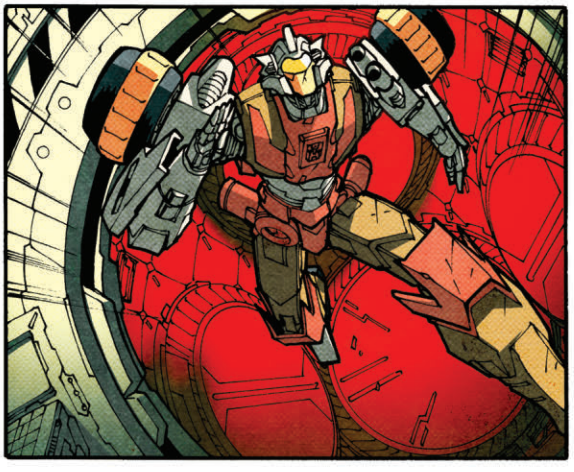
THE LOST LIGHT.
NOW IF YOU DON'T MIND, I THINK I'LL HEAD UPSTAIRS AND KILL EVERYONE ON THIS SHIP—STARTING WITH THAT SKINNY LITTLE FRIEND OF YOURS.

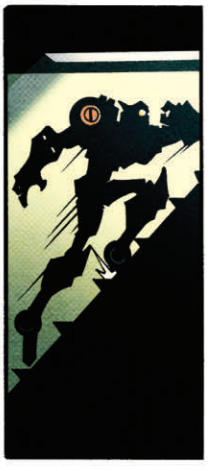
YOU'RE WELCOME TO FOLLOW ME AND RAISE THE ALARM.
I WON'T HURT YOU OR RESTRAIN YOU OR PUT ANY OBSTACLES IN YOUR WAY.

"WHAT I WILL DO IS CLOSE THIS DOOR BEHIND ME, REACTIVATING THE TEMPORAL DILATION FIELD.


"AND YOU... ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS CROSS THE FLOOR AND OPEN IT.
"IT SHOULD TAKE YOU—OOOH—FIVE SECONDS?

"FIVE SECONDS YOUR TIME.
"FROM MY PERSPECTIVE—AND FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EVERYONE ELSE ON BOARD—IT MIGHT AS WELL BE FIVE YEARS.

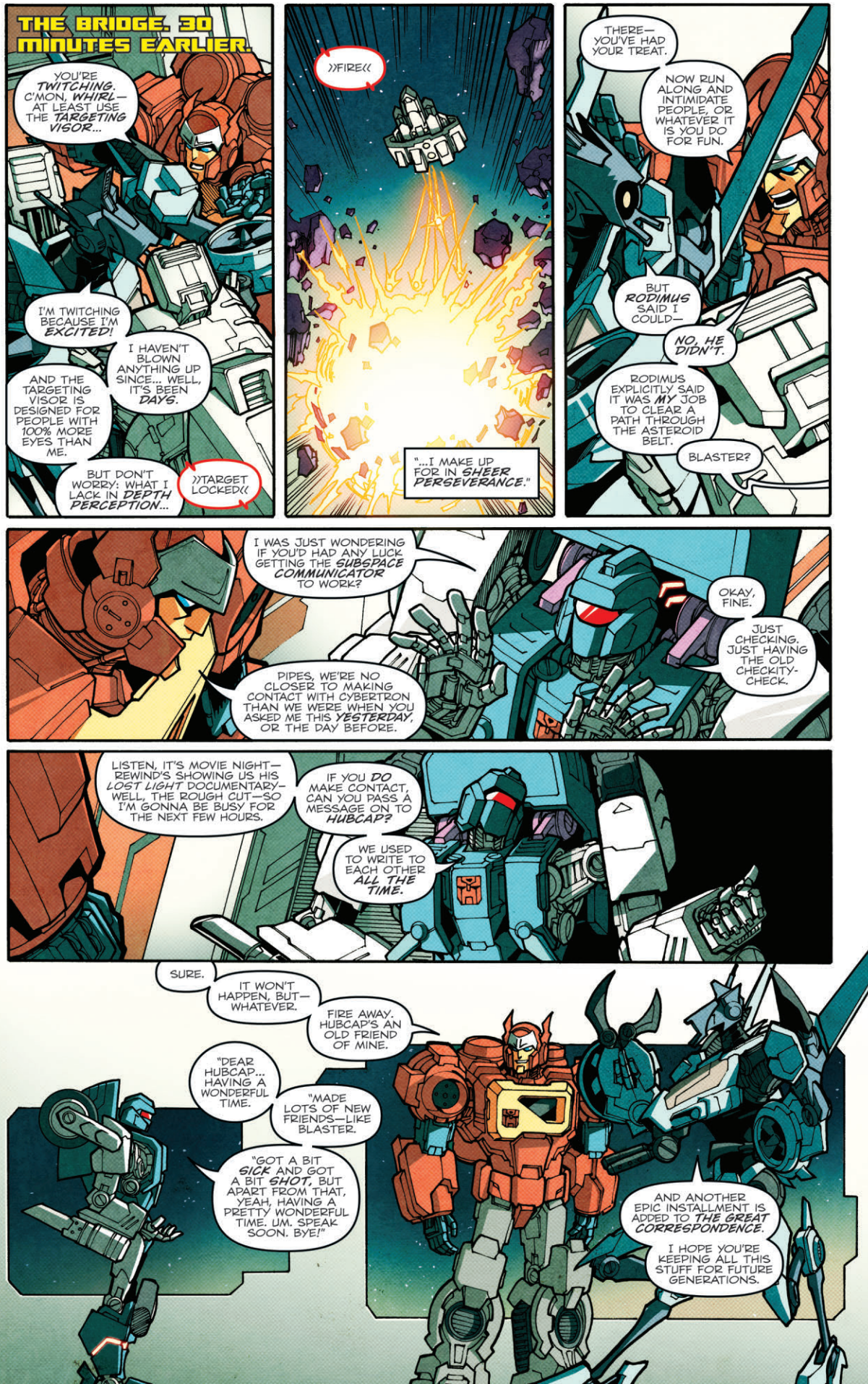


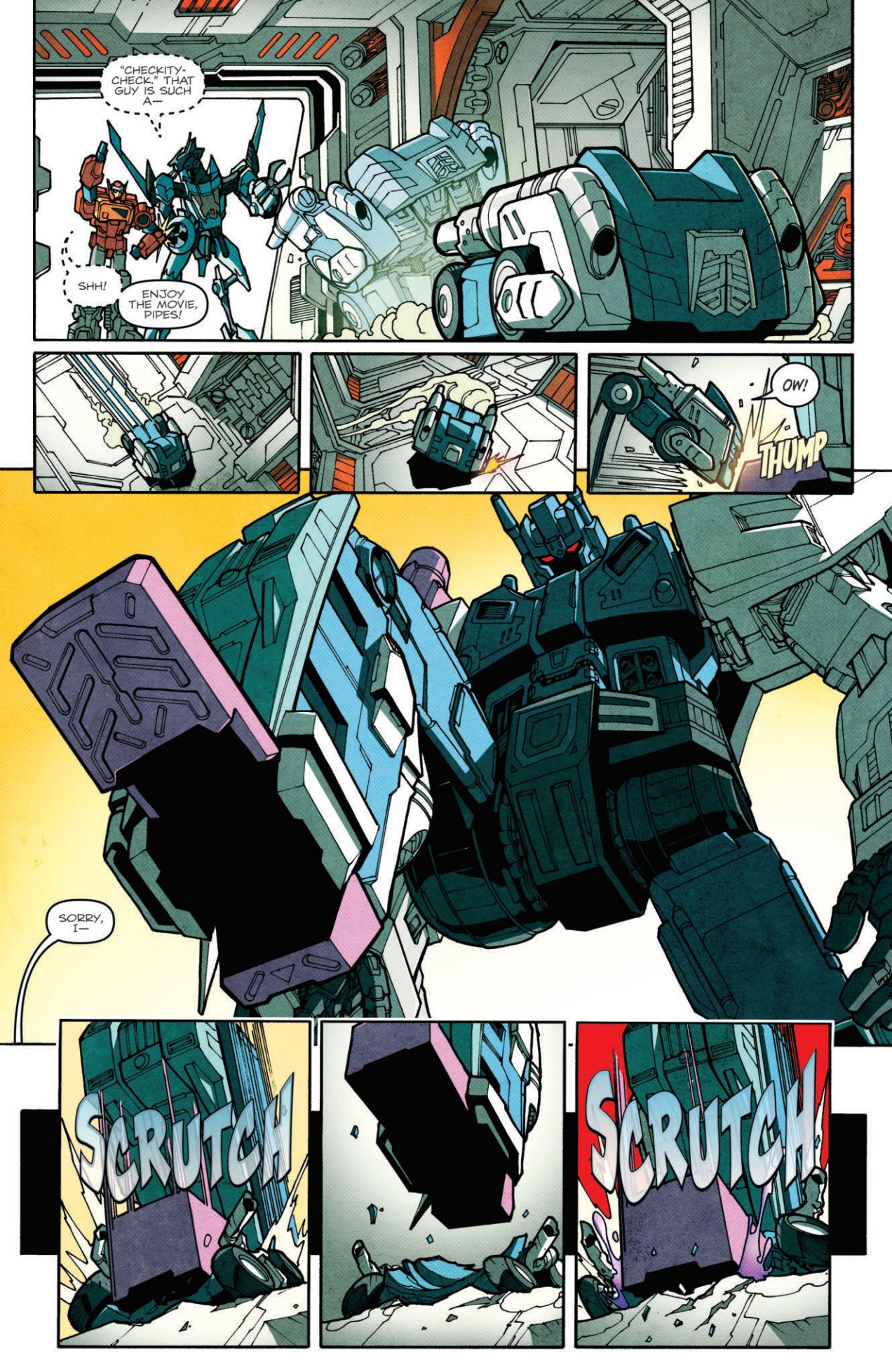


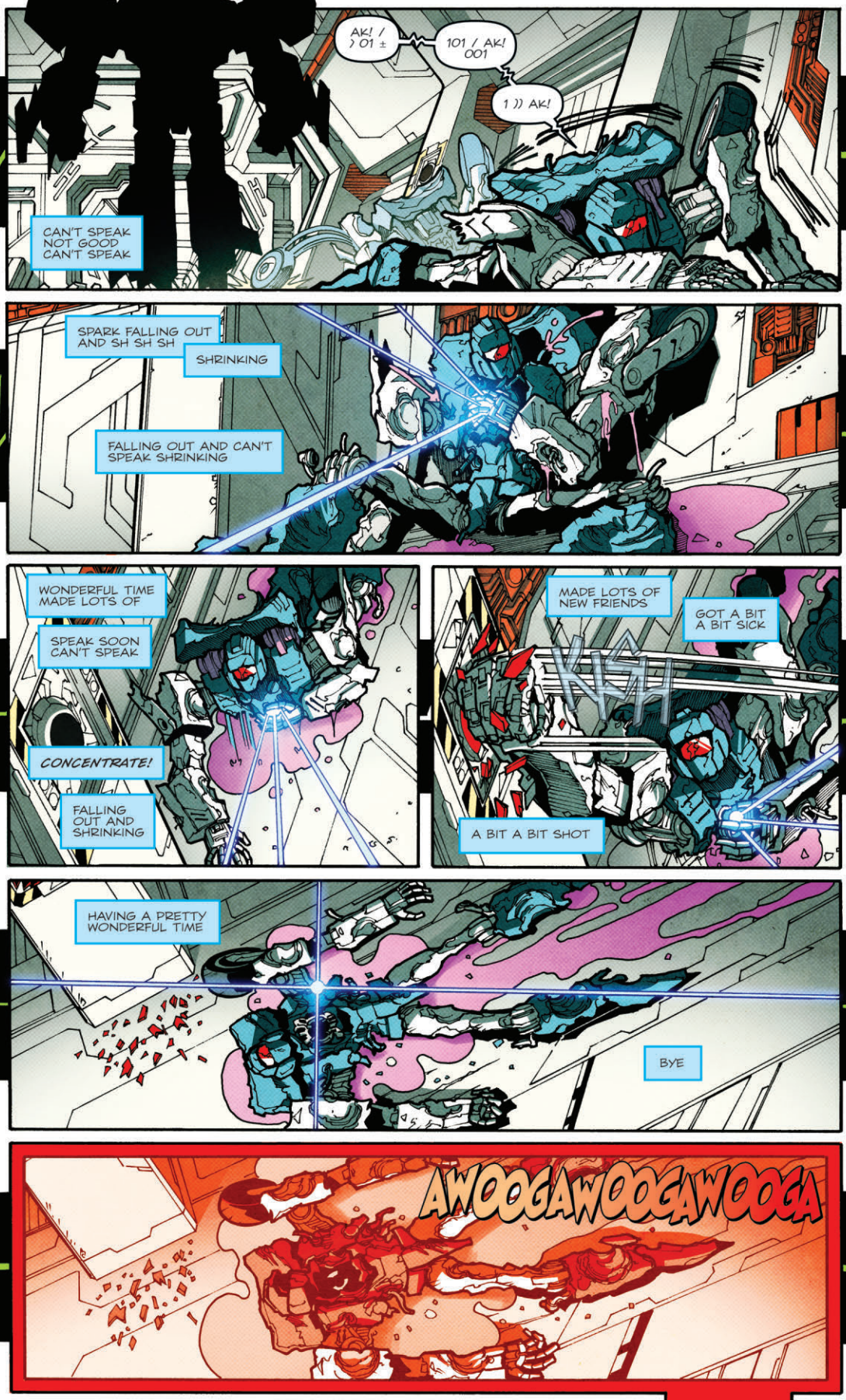
"RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN, CHROMEDOME...

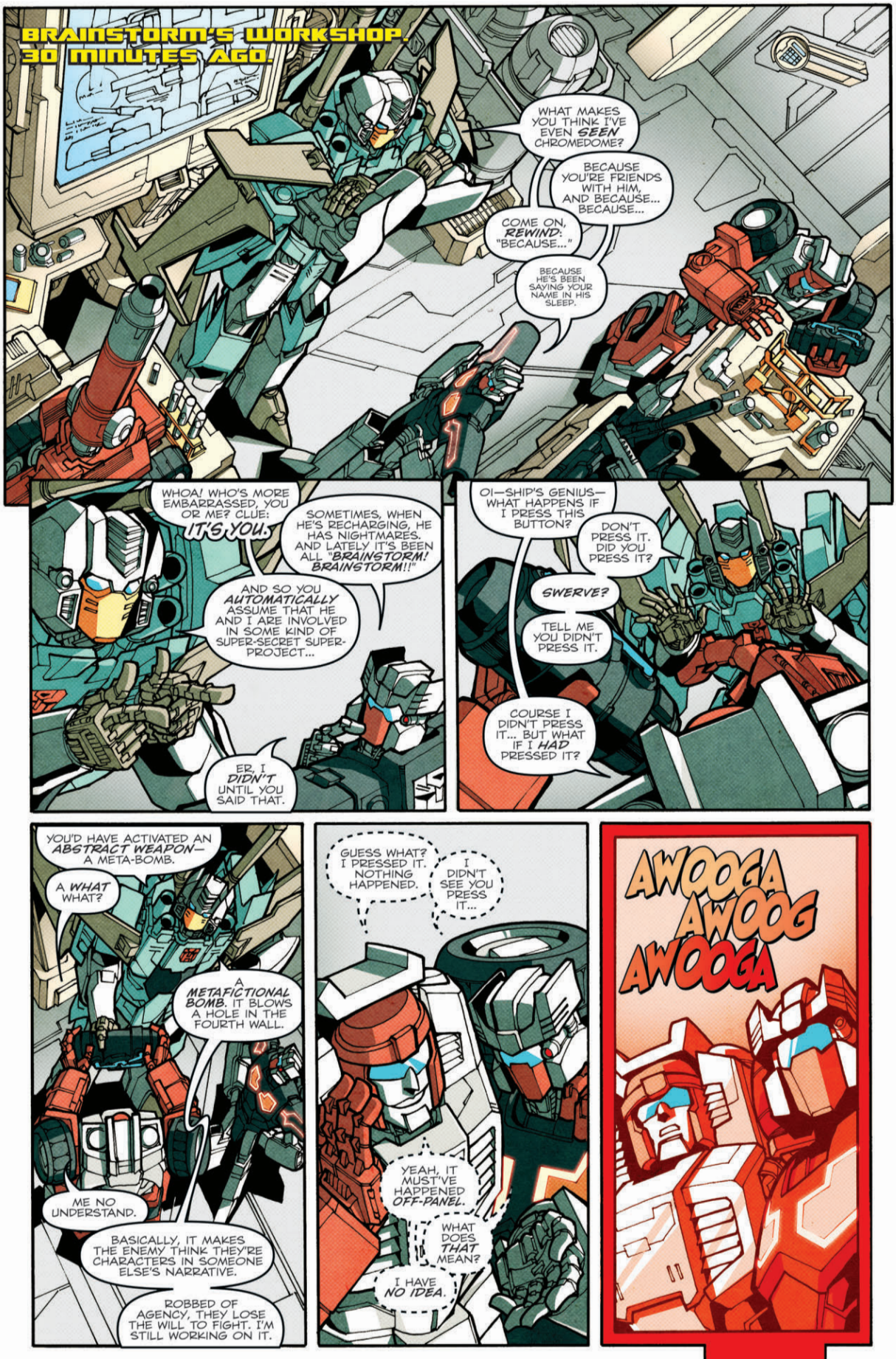
"...YOU'RE ALREADY TOO LATE."

REWIND?
UNDER COLD BLUE STARS


THE BRIDGE. 30 MINUTES EARLIER.
YOU'RE TWITCHING. C'MON, WHIRL— AT LEAST USE THE TARGETING VISOR...
I'M TWITCHING BECAUSE I'M EXCITED!
I HAVEN'T BLOWN ANYTHING UP SINCE... WELL, IT'S BEEN DAYS.
AND THE TARGETING VISOR IS DESIGNED FOR PEOPLE WITH 100% MORE EYES THAN ME.
BUT DON'T WORRY: WHAT I LACK IN DEPTH PERCEPTION...
)TARGET LOCKED(
)FIRE(
"...I MAKE UP FOR IN SHEER PERSEVERANCE."
THERE— YOU'VE HAD YOUR TREAT.
NOW RUN ALONG AND INTIMIDATE PEOPLE, OR WHATEVER IT IS YOU DO FOR FUN.
BUT RODIMUS SAID I COULD—
NO, HE DIDN'T.
RODIMUS EXPLICITLY SAID IT WAS MY JOB TO CLEAR A PATH THROUGH THE ASTEROID BELT.
BLASTER?
I WAS JUST WONDERING IF YOU'D HAD ANY LUCK GETTING THE SUBSPACE COMMUNICATOR TO WORK?
PIPES, WE'RE NO CLOSER TO MAKING CONTACT WITH CYBERTRON THAN WE WERE WHEN YOU ASKED ME THIS YESTERDAY, OR THE DAY BEFORE.
OKAY, FINE.
JUST CHECKING. JUST HAVING THE OLD CHECKITY-CHECK.
LISTEN, IT'S MOVIE NIGHT— REWIND'S SHOWING US HIS LOST LIGHT DOCUMENTARY— WELL, THE ROUGH CUT—SO I'M GONNA BE BUSY FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS.
IF YOU DO MAKE CONTACT, CAN YOU PASS A MESSAGE ON TO HUBCAP?
WE USED TO WRITE TO EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME.
SURE.
IT WON'T HAPPEN, BUT— WHATEVER.
FIRE AWAY. HUBCAP'S AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE.
"DEAR HUBCAP... HAVING A WONDERFUL TIME.
"MADE LOTS OF NEW FRIENDS—LIKE BLASTER.
"GOT A BIT SICK AND GOT A BIT SHOT, BUT APART FROM THAT, YEAH, HAVING A PRETTY WONDERFUL TIME. UM. SPEAK SOON. BYE!"
AND ANOTHER EPIC INSTALLMENT IS ADDED TO THE GREAT CORRESPONDENCE.
I HOPE YOU'RE KEEPING ALL THIS STUFF FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.


"CHECKITY-CHECK." THAT GUY IS SUCH A—
SHH!
ENJOY THE MOVIE, PIPES!
OW!
THUMP
SORRY, I—
SCRUTCH
SCRUTCH

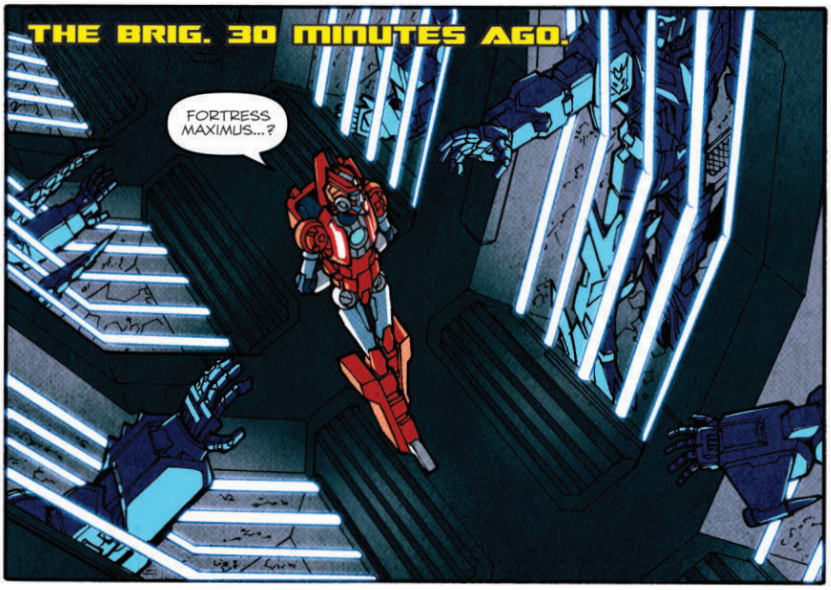

AK! / ) 01 ±
101 / AK! 001
1 )) AK!
CAN'T SPEAK NOT GOOD CAN'T SPEAK
SPARK FALLING OUT AND SH SH SH
SHRINKING
FALLING OUT AND CAN'T SPEAK SHRINKING
WONDERFUL TIME MADE LOTS OF
SPEAK SOON CAN'T SPEAK
CONCENTRATE!
FALLING OUT AND SHRINKING
MADE LOTS OF NEW FRIENDS
GOT A BIT A BIT SICK
A BIT A BIT SHOT
HAVING A PRETTY WONDERFUL TIME
BYE
AWOOGAWOOGAWOOGA


BRAINSTORM'S WORKSHOP. 30 MINUTES AGO.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'VE EVEN SEEN CHROMEDOME?
BECAUSE YOU'RE FRIENDS WITH HIM, AND BECAUSE... BECAUSE...
COME ON, REWIND: "BECAUSE..."
BECAUSE HE'S BEEN SAYING YOUR NAME IN HIS SLEEP.
WHOA! WHO'S MORE EMBARRASSED, YOU OR ME? CLUE: IT'S YOU.
SOMETIMES, WHEN HE'S RECHARGING, HE HAS NIGHTMARES. AND LATELY IT'S BEEN ALL "BRAINSTORM! BRAINSTORM!!"
AND SO YOU AUTOMATICALLY ASSUME THAT HE AND I ARE INVOLVED IN SOME KIND OF SUPER-SECRET SUPER-PROJECT...
ER, I DIDN'T UNTIL YOU SAID THAT.
O!—SHIP'S GENIUS—WHAT HAPPENS IF I PRESS THIS BUTTON?
DON'T PRESS IT. DID YOU PRESS IT?
SWERVE?
TELL ME YOU DIDN'T PRESS IT.
COURSE I DIDN'T PRESS IT... BUT WHAT IF I HAD PRESSED IT?
YOU'D HAVE ACTIVATED AN ABSTRACT WEAPON— A META-BOMB.
A WHAT WHAT?
A METAFICTIONAL BOMB. IT BLOWS A HOLE IN THE FOURTH WALL.
ME NO UNDERSTAND.
BASICALLY, IT MAKES THE ENEMY THINK THEY'RE CHARACTERS IN SOMEONE ELSE'S NARRATIVE.
ROBBED OF AGENCY, THEY LOSE THE WILL TO FIGHT. I'M STILL WORKING ON IT.
GUESS WHAT? I PRESSED IT. NOTHING HAPPENED.
I DIDN'T SEE YOU PRESS IT...
YEAH, IT MUST'VE HAPPENED OFF-PANEL.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
I HAVE NO IDEA.
AWOOGA AWOOG AWOOGA

PERCEPTOR'S LAB. 30 MINUTES AGO.
SIMPLE LANGUAGE, PERCEPTOR.
INTELLIGIBILITY ISN'T A WEAKNESS, YOU KNOW.
SOME OF MY FAVORITE WORDS ARE MONO-SYLLABIC.
BUT—
GOOD START.

RODIMUS, MY TESTS HAVE CONFIRMED THAT, AS YOU SUSPECTED, THE "MATRIX MAP"—
OUR ONLY WAY OF FINDING THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON, YEP, KNOW THIS BIT.
—IS COPY-PROTECTED.

WE CAN PROJECT THE MAP ONTO A FLAT SURFACE BUT WE CAN'T CAPTURE THE IMAGE IN A VIDSTILL OR PHOTO.


THE BRIG. 30 MINUTES AGO.
FORTRESS MAXIMUS...?

RUNG—THANKS FOR COMING.
I PREPARED A SPEECH—IN MY HEAD—AND IT WAS—IT WAS ACTUALLY PRETTY GOOD.
BUT I REALIZED IT WAS MORE FOR MY BENEFIT THAN YOURS, SO...
SO...
...SO I'M JUST GOING TO SAY SORRY.

HOIST'S WORKSHOP. 30 MINUTES AGO.
IMPRESSED?
VERY.
WHAT IS IT?
YOU CAN'T TELL?
TAILGATE!

GUESS WHO'S HEADING THIS—
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
YOU CAN'T TELL EITHER?
ARE YOU BLIND?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT CRAFTSMANSHIP LOOKS LIKE?
IS THAT A DIG AT MY AMNESIA?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
AM I SUPPOSED TO—WAIT! NOT THE QUESTION GAME, NOT NOW! THERE'S NO TIME!

THE PLAYBACK'S ALWAYS *CORRUPTED.*
WHAT'S MORE, THE IMAGE—THE MAP—APPEARS TO *RESIST MEMORIZATION.*
YOU CAN REMEMBER *LOOKING* AT IT, BUT THE DETAIL ALWAYS SLIPS AWAY. YOU CAN'T RECREATE IT.
THE "BOTTOM LINE"—AND I FEEL I'VE CHEAPENED MY PROFESSION BY RESORTING TO THAT PHRASE—IS THAT WE CAN'T MAKE A BACKUP.

THERE! *A FULL SIXTY SENTENCES SHORTER* THAN YOUR FIRST ATTEMPT—AND NO SIGN OF THE WORD "HERMENEUTICS."
I SUGGEST WE—

AWOOGA
AWOOG

WAKING UP FROM THE COMA—TALKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED ON GARRUS 9, WITH OVERLORD—TAKING YOU HOSTAGE... I WAS *OVERWHELMED.*
I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE ME.
SHUSH NOW.
...I'VE BEEN AROUND FOR A WHILE NOW...

...I'VE LEARNED TO FORGIVE ANYTHING.

AWOOGA
AWOOG

IT'S *CYCLONUS!* HE'S ON THE WARPATH!
I'LL, ER, I'LL JUST BE OVER THERE...
WHAT, HE'S KILLING PEOPLE?
OKAY, NOT *THAT* TYPE OF WARPATH—BUT HE'S *FURIOUS!*
WHY WOULD HE—?
OH.
UNLESS... HE'S FOUND OUT THAT WE'RE GOING TO HOST MOVIE NIGHT.
TAILGATE!

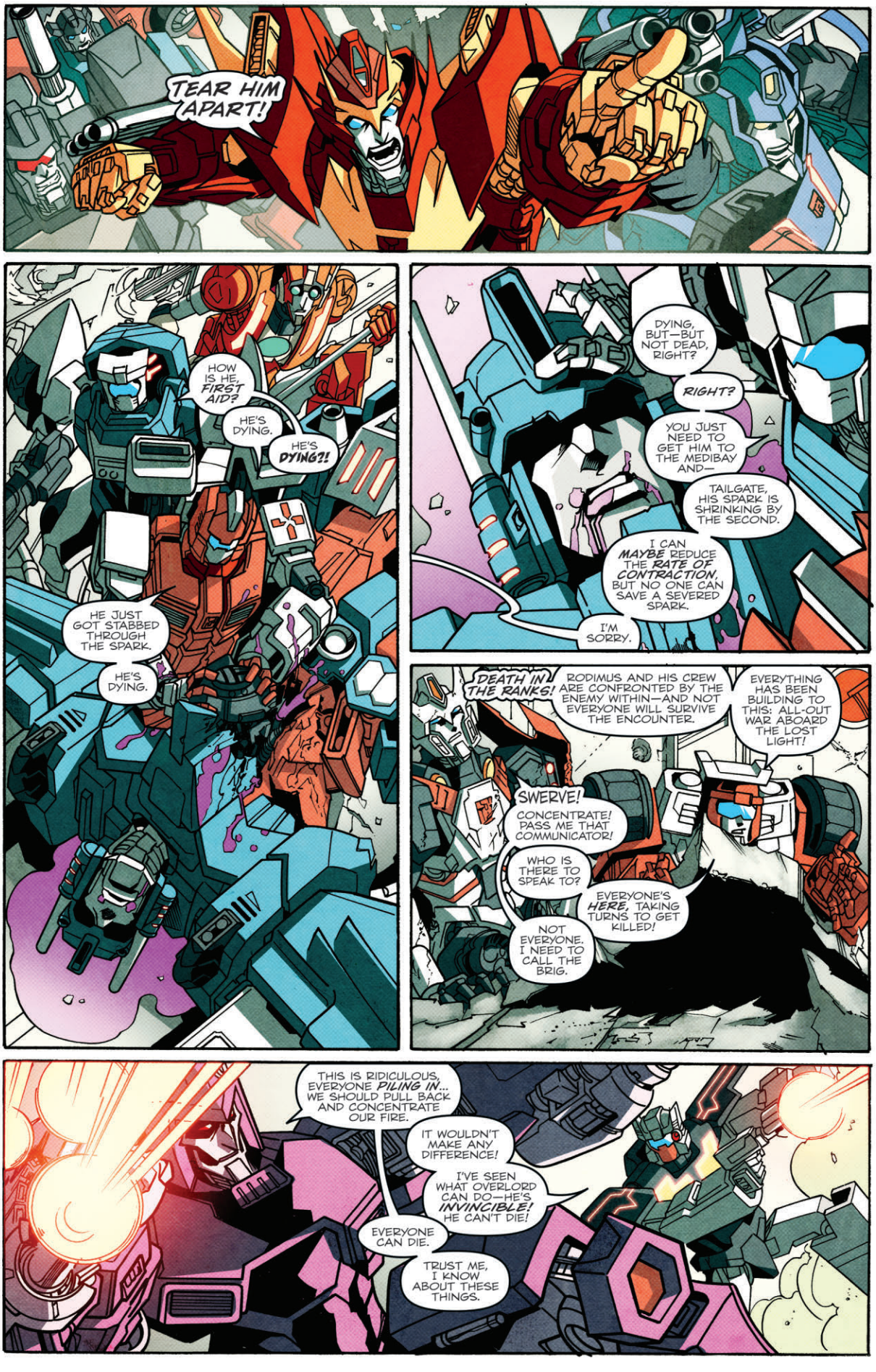
AWOOGA
AWOOG

THE MEDIBAY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM IS, CHILL OUT"?
RODIMUS, THE ALARMS DON'T JUST CHOOSE TO GO OFF!
I'VE GOT PATIENTS IN HERE!
I NEED TO KNOW WHETHER TO PUT THE MEDIBAY INTO LOCKDOWN!
AND DON'T SMIRK!
I CAN HEAR YOU SMIRKING!
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, KEEP YOUR HANDS ON!
WE'RE NOT UNDER ATTACK FROM OUTSIDE, AND THE BRIG IS STILL SECURE, SO I'M THINKING "FALSE ALARM".
DRIFT'S CHECKING IT OUT NOW. HELLO...? RATCHET?
"KEEP YOUR HANDS ON"? DO YOU REALIZE HOW OFFENSIVE THAT—
WAIT.
BLAM
SPAK
FAIR WARNING, OVERLORD—
—I'M GOING TO DO MY LEVEL BEST TO KILL YOU.

THE MEDIBAY. GO—LOCK YOURSELF IN. MY FAITH WILL PROTECT ME.
I WAS AFRAID YOU'D SAY THAT.
MY FAITH AND MY SWORD.
YOUR FAITH, YOUR SWORD, AND YOUR FRIEND. WE DO THIS TOGETHER.
RODIMUS? TOOL UP AND GET DOWN TO THE MEDIBAY.
MEDICAL
BRING EVERYONE.
AND IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO ME, TELL FIRST AID HE'S READY, TELL WHIRL HE CAN HAVE MY HANDS, AND TELL ALL MY PATIENTS...
"...THAT THEY'LL HAVE TO MAKE NEW APPOINTMENTS."
OVERLORD!
DRIFT!
RATCHET!
AMAZING. YOU SPEAK ENTIRELY IN NAMES.
SHUT UP! PUT HIM DOWN!
PUT HIM DOWN OR WHAT?

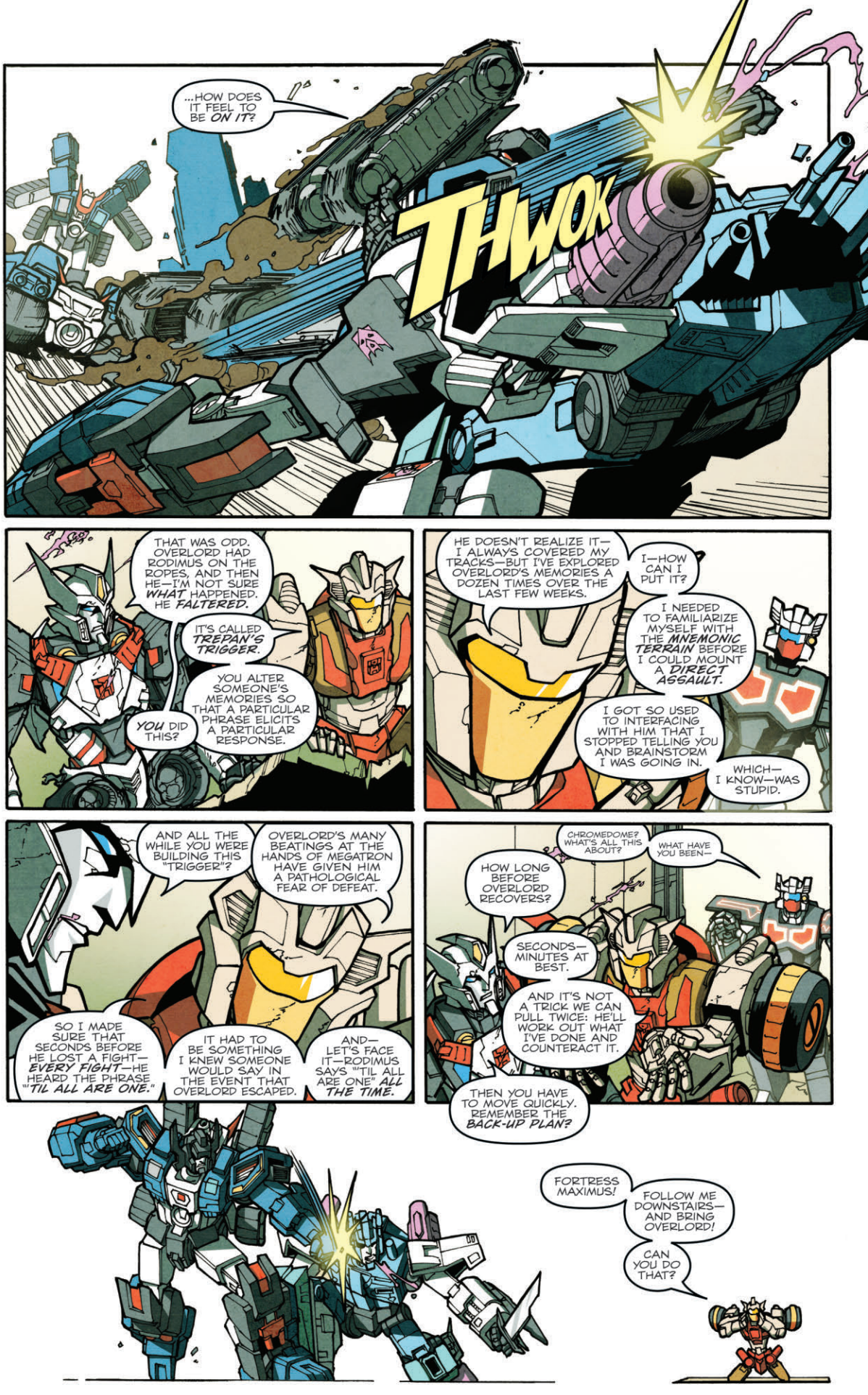
THUNK
OR THIS.
OVERLORD?! HOW?!
I— I DON'T KNOW!
HE MUST'VE TELEPORTED ON BOARD, OR STOWED AWAY, OR—OR—
I DON'T KNOW!
GOT ANY REGRETS, OVERLORD?
BECAUSE I DO.
HELL, I'VE GOT A LIST.
AND YOU— YOU'RE NEAR THE TOP.
I SHOULD'VE GONE TO GARRUS 9 WITH THE WRECKERS.
SHOULD'VE SORTED YOU OUT THEN.
I'VE OFTEN WONDERED IF THINGS WOULD'VE PLAYED OUT DIFFERENTLY HAD I BEEN THERE.
GUESS NOW I KNOW.
HEH-HEH-HEH
UM... SORRY, I—
HEH-HEH-HEH-HEH
WHAT'S THE JOKE?

YOU, ULTRA MAGNUS.
THE JOKE IS YOU.
EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU—THE SELF-IMPORTANCE, THE SENSE OF DUTY, THE MACHO POSTURING MASQUERADING AS GUILT.
YOU'RE THE JOKE AND THE JOKE IS YOU.
BUT—SEE—THAT'S NOT WHY I'M LAUGHING.
I'M LAUGHING BECAUSE YOU'VE NOT BEEN HOLDING BACK—
—AND I HAVE.
MAGNUS!

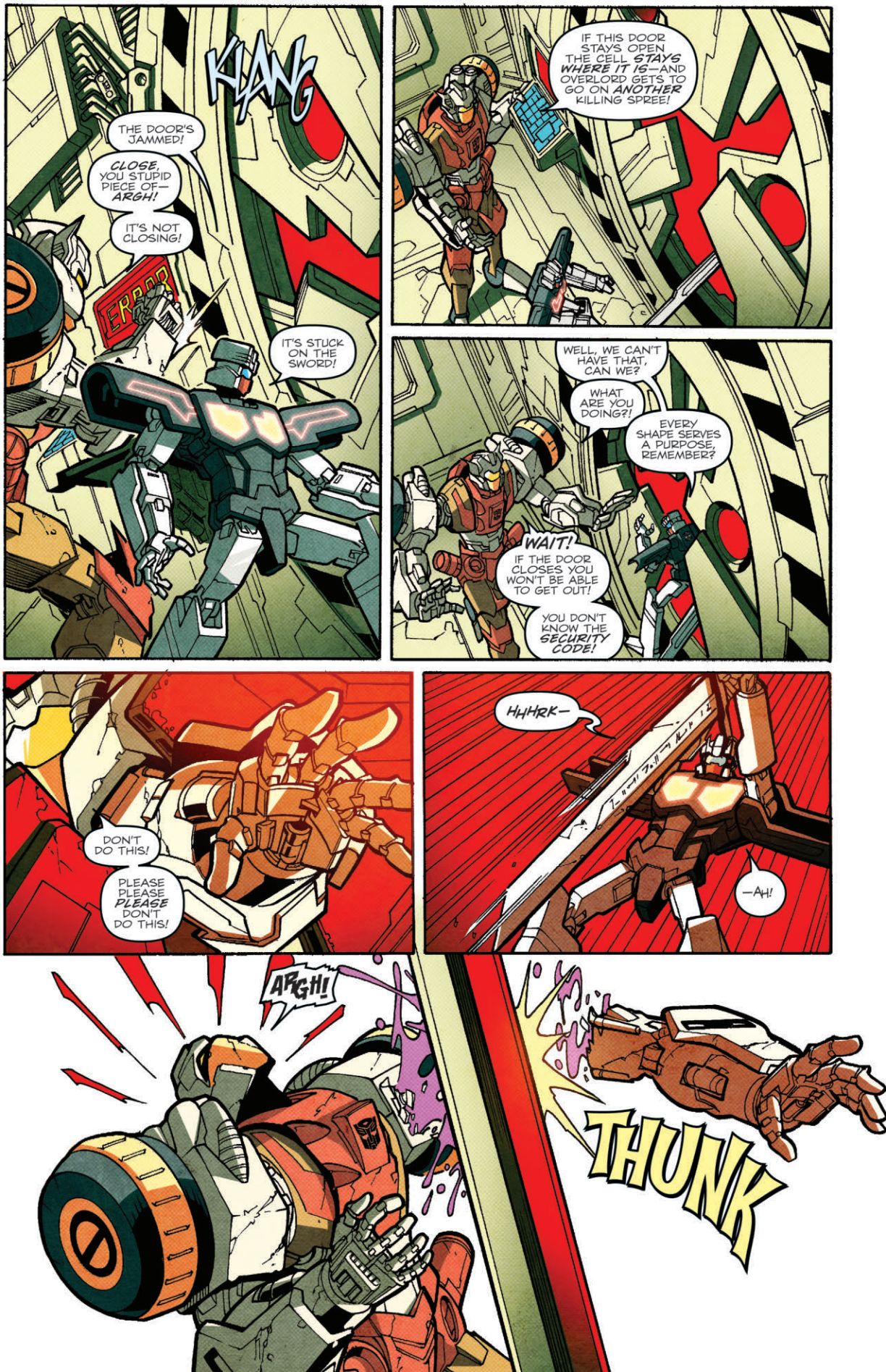

TEAR HIM APART!
HOW IS HE, FIRST AID?
HE'S DYING.
HE'S DYING?!
HE JUST GOT STABBED THROUGH THE SPARK.
HE'S DYING.
DYING, BUT—BUT NOT DEAD, RIGHT?
RIGHT?
YOU JUST NEED TO GET HIM TO THE MEDIBAY AND—
TAILGATE, HIS SPARK IS SHRINKING BY THE SECOND.
I CAN MAYBE REDUCE THE RATE OF CONTRACTION, BUT NO ONE CAN SAVE A SEVERED SPARK.
I'M SORRY.
DEATH IN THE RANKS!
RODIMUS AND HIS CREW ARE CONFRONTED BY THE ENEMY WITHIN—AND NOT EVERYONE WILL SURVIVE THE ENCOUNTER.
EVERYTHING HAS BEEN BUILDING TO THIS: ALL-OUT WAR ABOARD THE LOST LIGHT!
SWERVE!
CONCENTRATE! PASS ME THAT COMMUNICATOR!
WHO IS THERE TO SPEAK TO?
EVERYONE'S HERE, TAKING TURNS TO GET KILLED!
NOT EVERYONE. I NEED TO CALL THE BRIG.
THIS IS RIDICULOUS, EVERYONE PILING IN... WE SHOULD PULL BACK AND CONCENTRATE OUR FIRE.
IT WOULDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!
I'VE SEEN WHAT OVERLORD CAN DO—HE'S INVINCIBLE! HE CAN'T DIE!
EVERYONE CAN DIE.
TRUST ME, I KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS.

HEADS UP, OVER—
HRK!
LIGHTWEIGHT.
REWIND?
CHROMEDOME! OVER HERE!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
YOU LIKE FINGER-DRILLS?
I WANTED NEEDLES, BUT—
OH, I'M SORRY.
I MEANT TO ASK: ANY LAST WORDS?
YEAH: TILL ALL... ARE ONE.

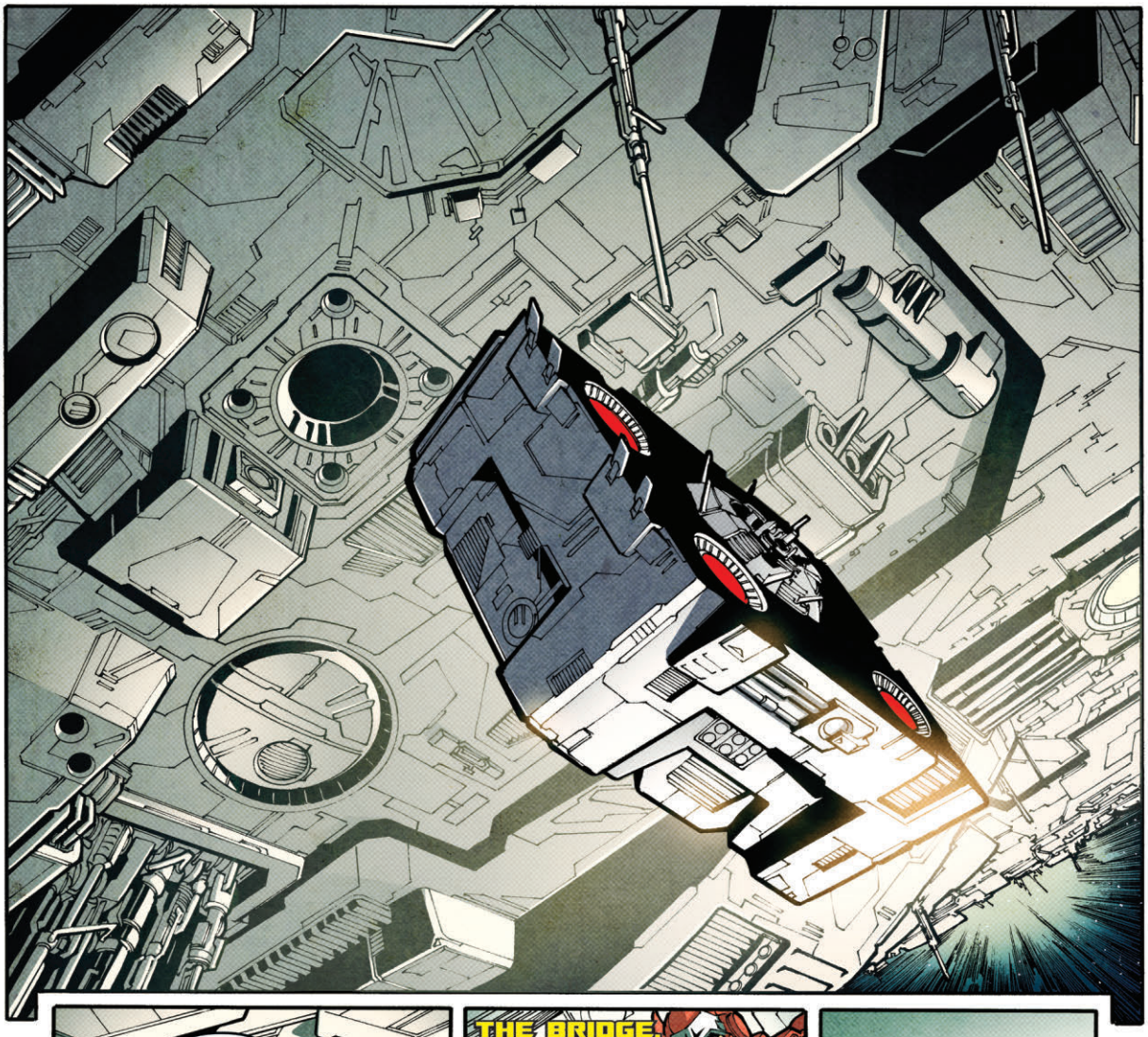
NO
NO
NO
HNNF!
THE RECEIVING END, OVERLORD...


...HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE ON IT?
THWOK
THAT WAS ODD. OVERLORD HAD RODIMUS ON THE ROPES, AND THEN HE—I'M NOT SURE WHAT HAPPENED. HE FALTERED.
IT'S CALLED TREPAN'S TRIGGER.
YOU ALTER SOMEONE'S MEMORIES SO THAT A PARTICULAR PHRASE ELICITS A PARTICULAR RESPONSE.
YOU DID THIS?
HE DOESN'T REALIZE IT—I ALWAYS COVERED MY TRACKS—BUT I'VE EXPLORED OVERLORD'S MEMORIES A DOZEN TIMES OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS.
I—HOW CAN I PUT IT?
I NEEDED TO FAMILIARIZE MYSELF WITH THE MNEMONIC TERRAIN BEFORE I COULD MOUNT A DIRECT ASSAULT.
I GOT SO USED TO INTERFACING WITH HIM THAT I STOPPED TELLING YOU AND BRAINSTORM I WAS GOING IN.
WHICH—I KNOW—WAS STUPID.
AND ALL THE WHILE YOU WERE BUILDING THIS "TRIGGER"?
OVERLORD'S MANY BEATINGS AT THE HANDS OF MEGATRON HAVE GIVEN HIM A PATHOLOGICAL FEAR OF DEFEAT.
SO I MADE SURE THAT SECONDS BEFORE HE LOST A FIGHT—EVERY FIGHT—HE HEARD THE PHRASE "'TIL ALL ARE ONE."
IT HAD TO BE SOMETHING I KNEW SOMEONE WOULD SAY IN THE EVENT THAT OVERLORD ESCAPED.
AND—LET'S FACE IT—RODIMUS SAYS "'TIL ALL ARE ONE" ALL THE TIME.
CHROMEDOME? WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN—
HOW LONG BEFORE OVERLORD RECOVERS?
SECONDS—MINUTES AT BEST.
AND IT'S NOT A TRICK WE CAN PULL TWICE: HE'LL WORK OUT WHAT I'VE DONE AND COUNTERACT IT.
THEN YOU HAVE TO MOVE QUICKLY. REMEMBER THE BACK-UP PLAN?
FORTRESS MAXIMUS!
FOLLOW ME DOWNSTAIRS—AND BRING OVERLORD!
CAN YOU DO THAT?

WATCH ME.
GOOD WORK, MAX!
NOW GET OUT OF THERE BEFORE HE GETS HIS BEARINGS!
YOU'RE ANGRY.
NO, I'M PAST THAT.
IT'S—WHAT I FEEL IS WORSE THAN ANGER. IN FACT I DON'T KNOW—
WHAT?
I REALLY DON'T KNOW IF I CAN FORGIVE YOU FOR THIS.
WE'LL FINISH THIS CONVERSATION LATER.
WE WILL. I PROMISE.
WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING?
PROWL MODIFIED OVERLORD'S CELL SO IT COULD BE ATTACHED TO THE HULL OF THE SHIP.
SO?
SO IF SOMETHING CAN BE ATTACHED, IT CAN BE DETACHED.
I'M INITIATING THE EJECTION PROCEDURE.
AND...


KLANG
THE DOOR'S JAMMED!
CLOSE, YOU STUPID PIECE OF— ARGH!
IT'S NOT CLOSING!
IT'S STUCK ON THE SWORD!
IF THIS DOOR STAYS OPEN THE CELL STAYS WHERE IT IS—AND OVERLORD GETS TO GO ON ANOTHER KILLING SPREE!
WELL, WE CAN'T HAVE THAT, CAN WE?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
EVERY SHAPE SERVES A PURPOSE, REMEMBER?
WAIT!
IF THE DOOR CLOSES YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO GET OUT!
YOU DON'T KNOW THE SECURITY CODE!
DON'T DO THIS!
PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE DON'T DO THIS!
HHHRK—
—AH!
ARGH!
THUNK

+++EJECTION SEQUENCE INITIATED
+++EJECTION IN T-MINUS FIVE... FOUR...
LISTEN TO ME!
LOOK AT ME!
I NEED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING!
REWIND, I—
+++THREE
WHAT? I CAN'T HEAR YOU—!
+++TWO
I'M SORRY, DOMEY.
I'M SORRY THINGS DIDN'T WORK OUT.
+++ONE
+++CARGO JETTISONED



WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

THE BRIDGE
OUT OF MY WAY!
WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

REWIND'S TRAPPED IN THERE WITH OVERLORD.
I'M DOING THE ONLY THING I CAN DO.
))TARGET LOCKED((

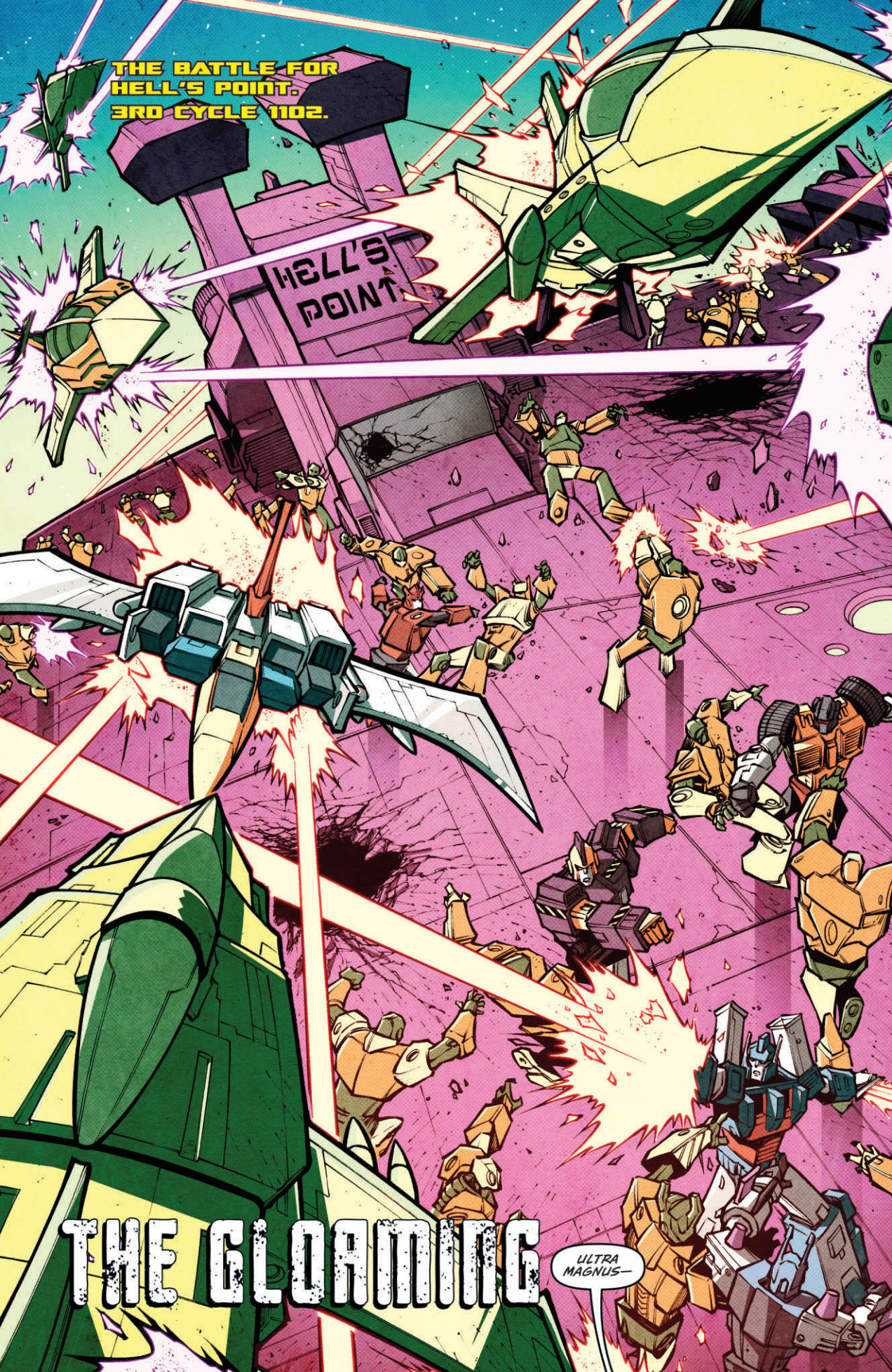
»FIRE«

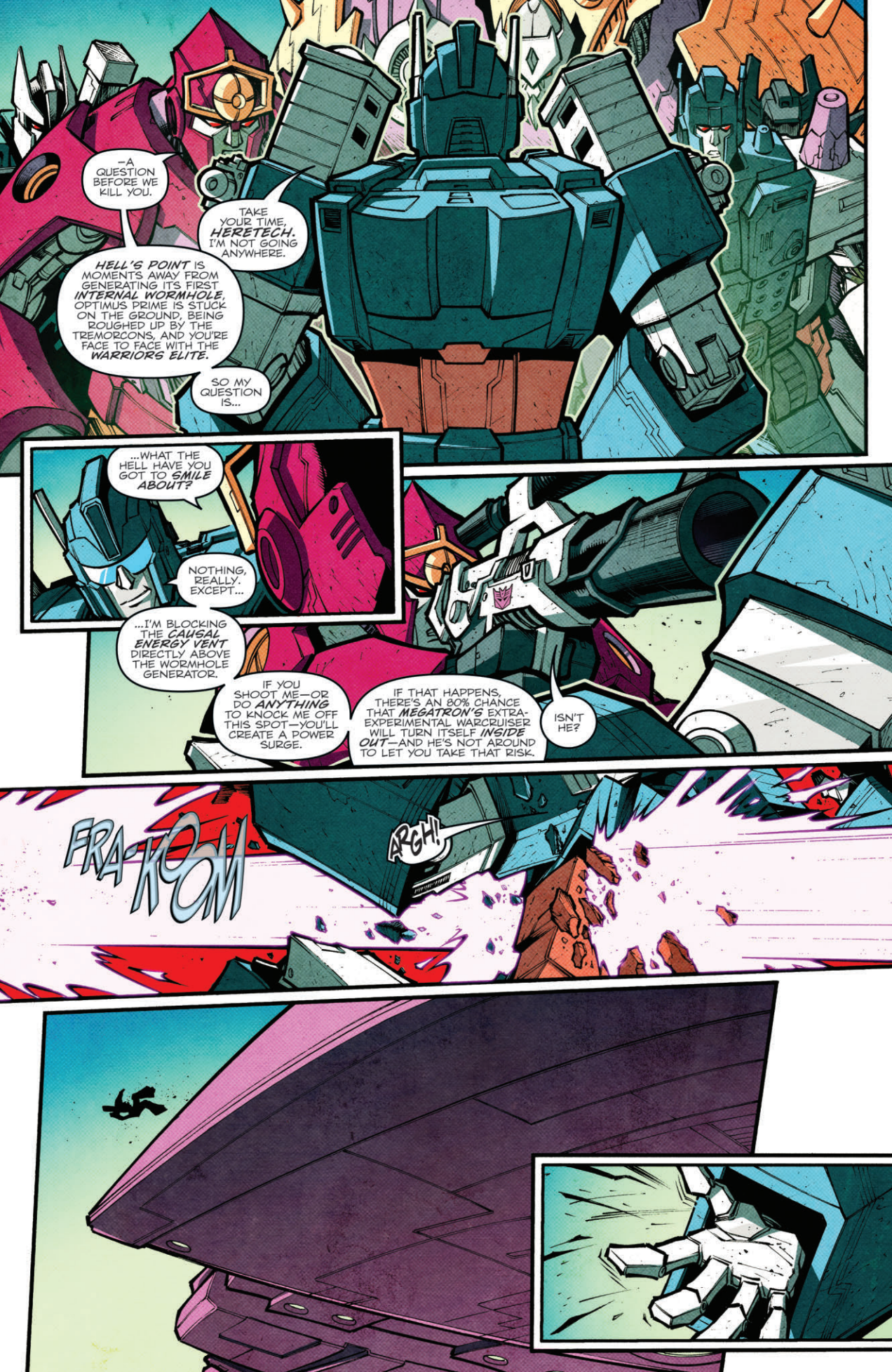
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #16 COVER B

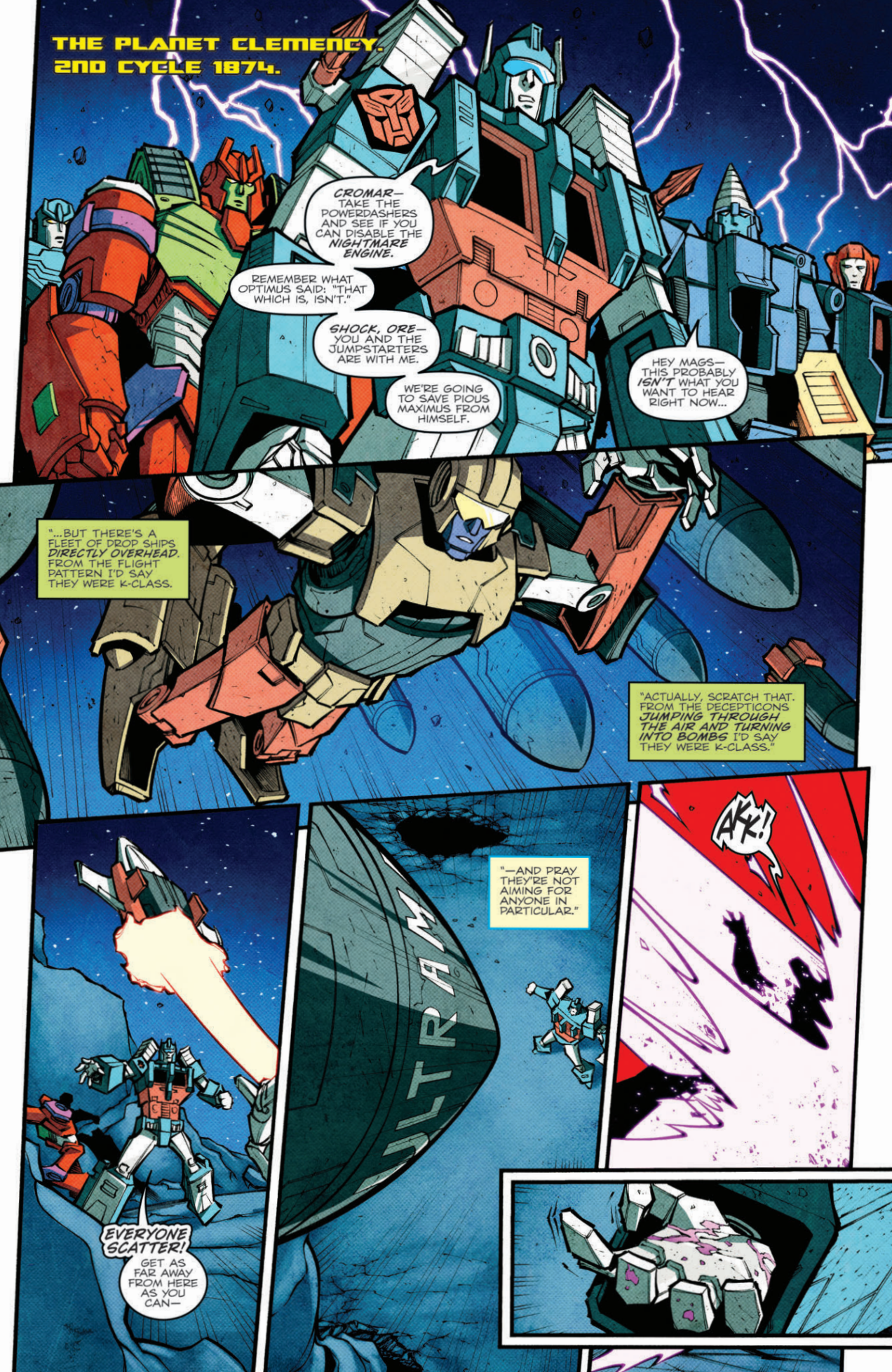
by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **PRISCILLA TRAMONTANO**

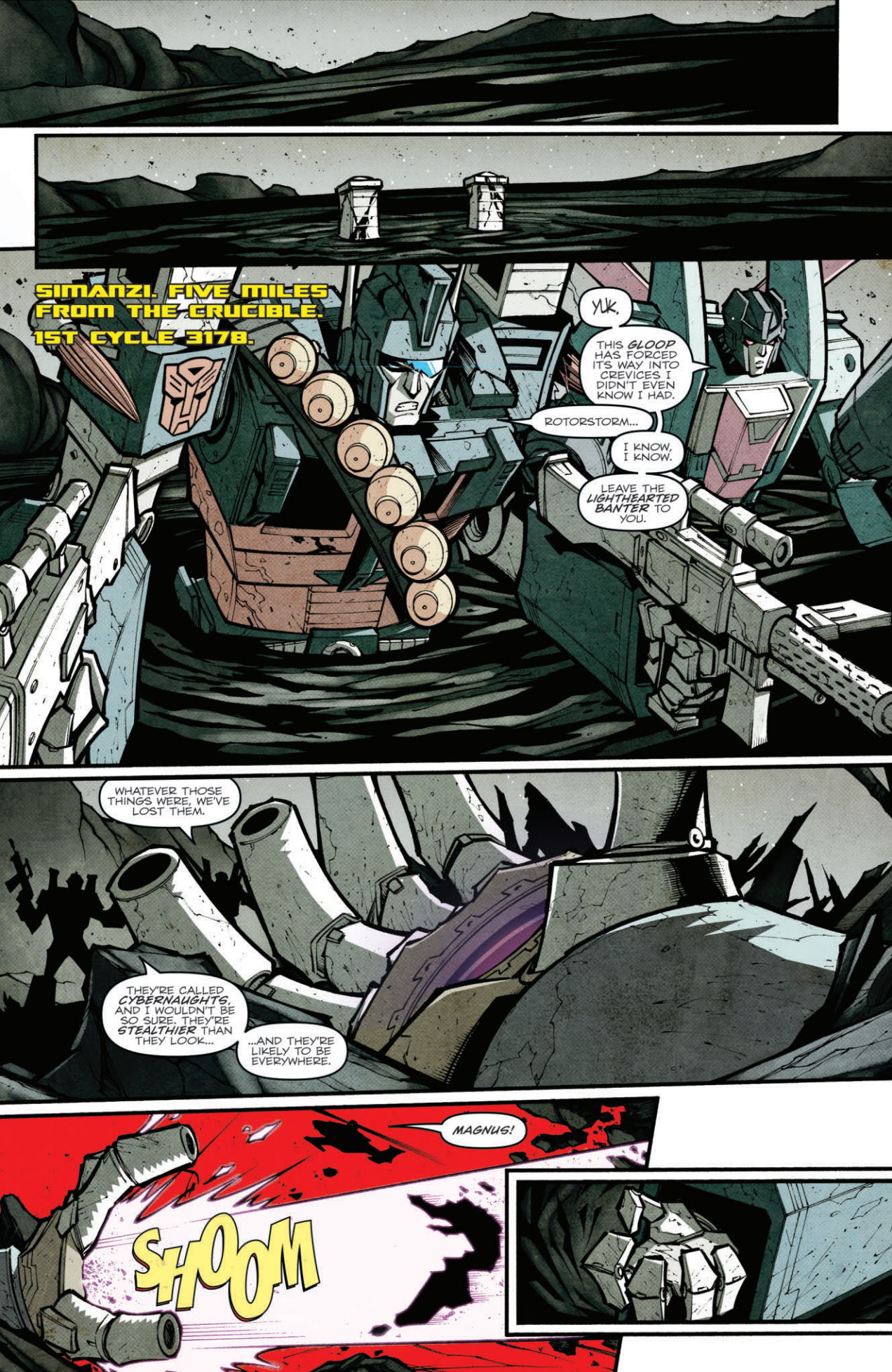
☐ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #16 COVER A

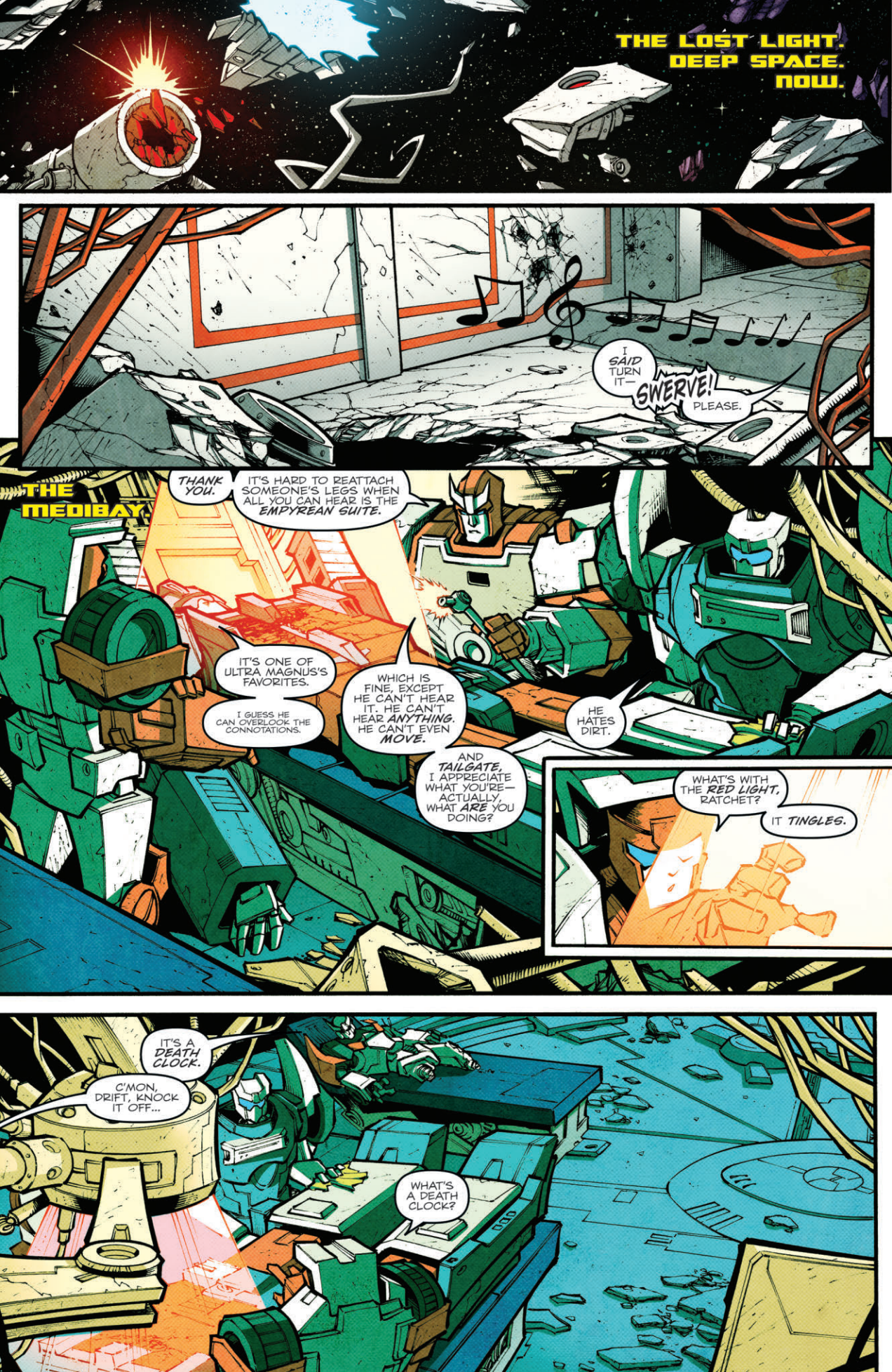
by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**

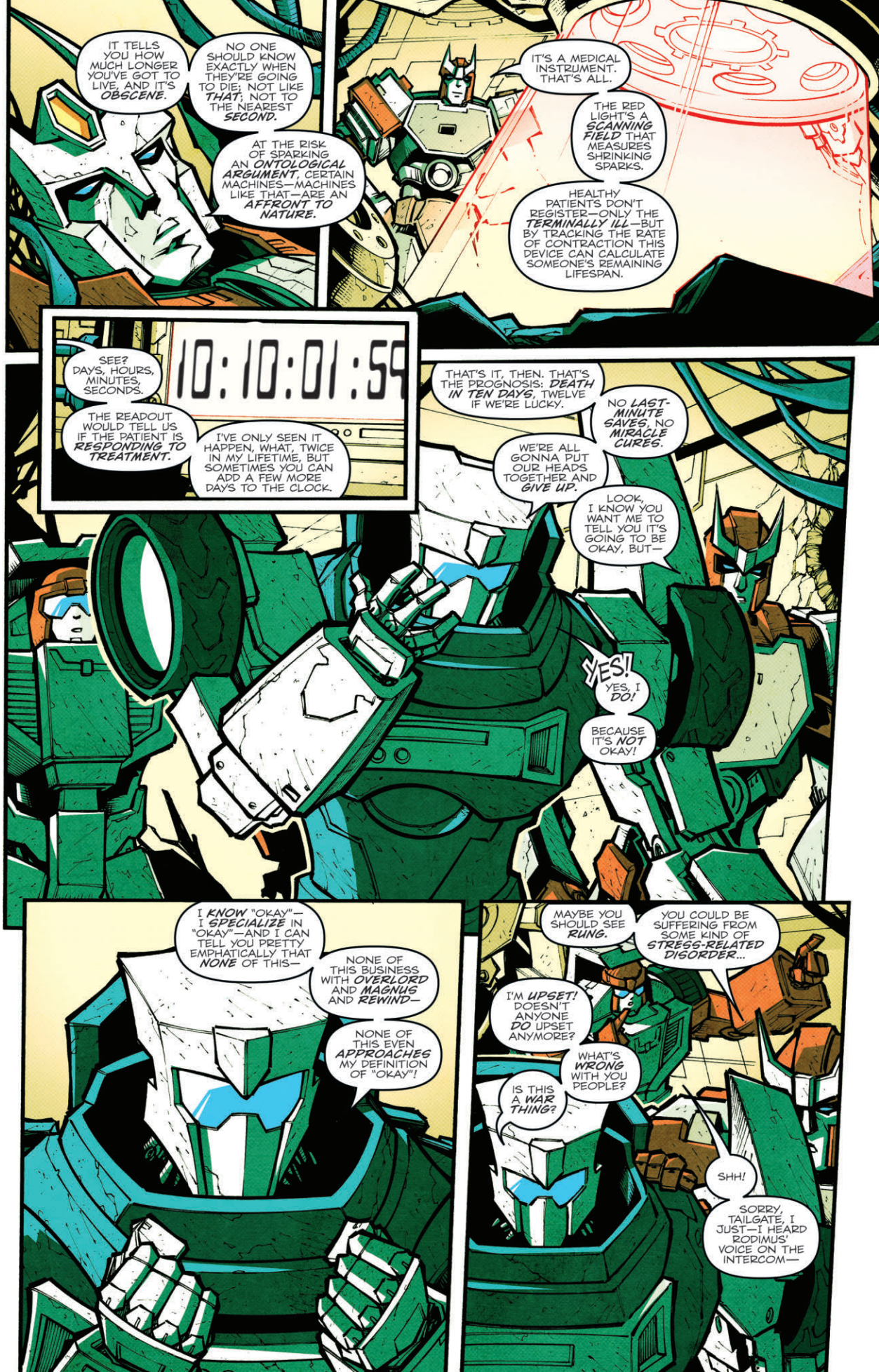

THE BATTLE FOR HELL'S POINT. 3RD CYCLE 1102.
HELL'S POINT
THE GLOAMING
ULTRA MAGNUS—

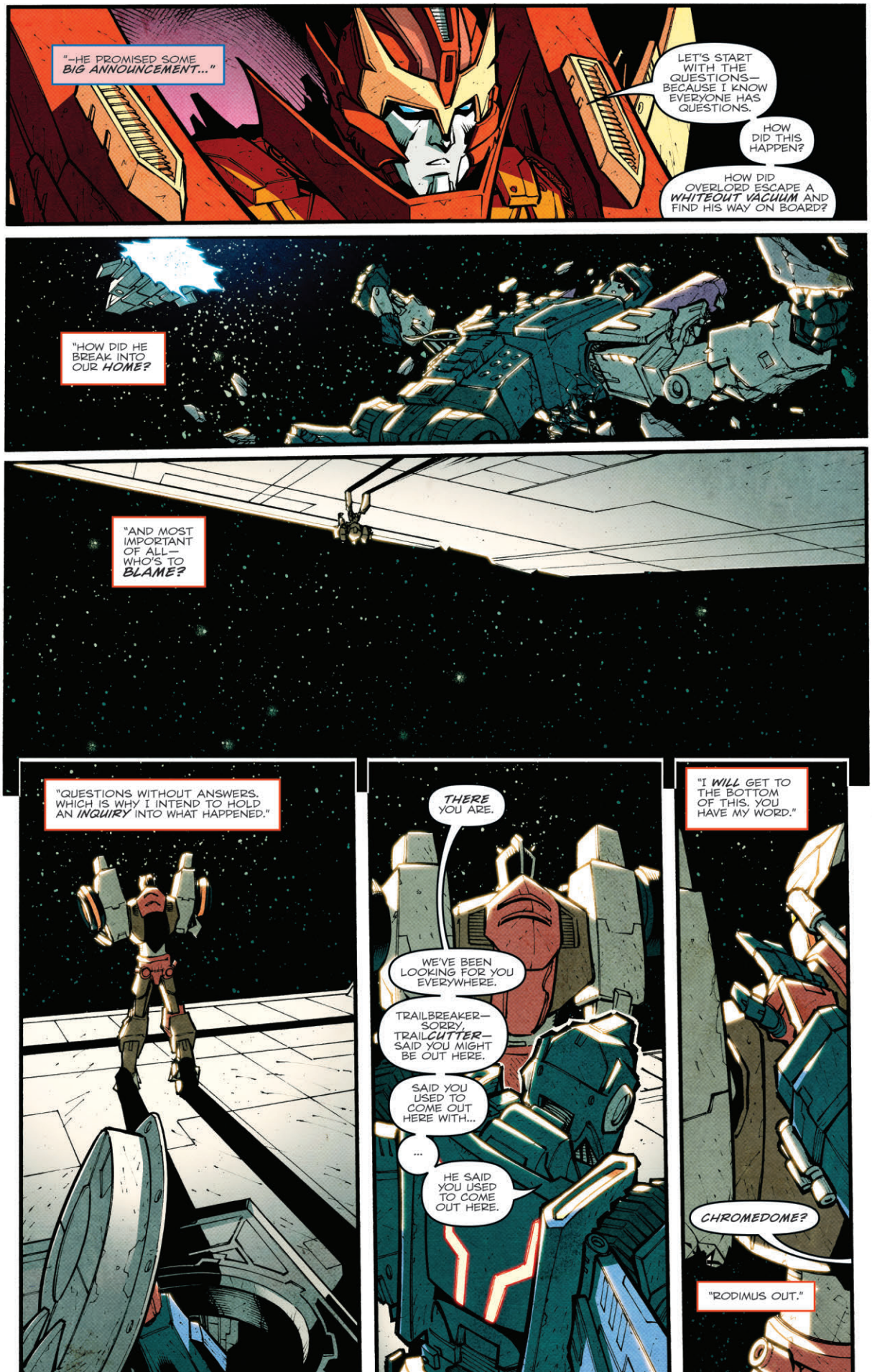

—A QUESTION BEFORE WE KILL YOU.
TAKE YOUR TIME, HERETECH. I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
HELL'S POINT IS MOMENTS AWAY FROM GENERATING ITS FIRST INTERNAL WORMHOLE, OPTIMUS PRIME IS STUCK ON THE GROUND, BEING ROUGHED UP BY THE TREMORCONS, AND YOU'RE FACE TO FACE WITH THE WARRIORS ELITE.
SO MY QUESTION IS...
...WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU GOT TO SMILE ABOUT?
NOTHING, REALLY. EXCEPT...
...I'M BLOCKING THE CAUSAL ENERGY VENT DIRECTLY ABOVE THE WORMHOLE GENERATOR.
IF YOU SHOOT ME—OR DO ANYTHING TO KNOCK ME OFF THIS SPOT—YOU'LL CREATE A POWER SURGE.
IF THAT HAPPENS, THERE'S AN 80% CHANCE THAT MEGATRON'S EXTRA-EXPERIMENTAL WARCRUISER WILL TURN ITSELF INSIDE OUT—AND HE'S NOT AROUND TO LET YOU TAKE THAT RISK.
ISN'T HE?
FRA-KOOM
ARGH!

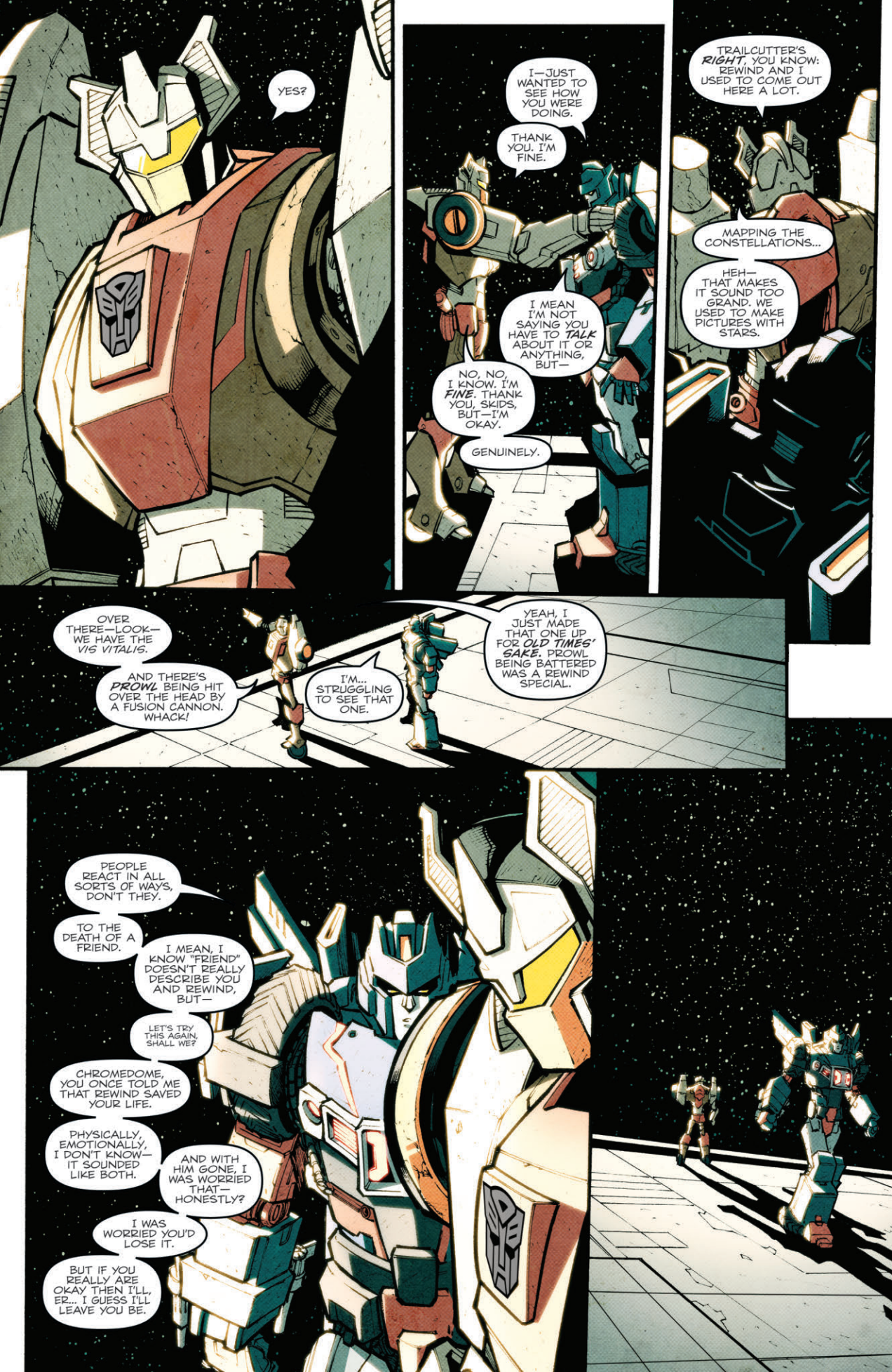

THE PLANET CLEMENCY.
2ND CYCLE 1874.
CROMAR— TAKE THE POWERDASHERS AND SEE IF YOU CAN DISABLE THE NIGHTMARE ENGINE.
REMEMBER WHAT OPTIMUS SAID: "THAT WHICH IS, ISN'T."
SHOCK, ORE— YOU AND THE JUMPSTARTERS ARE WITH ME.
WE'RE GOING TO SAVE PIOUS MAXIMUS FROM HIMSELF.
HEY MAGS— THIS PROBABLY ISN'T WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR RIGHT NOW...
"...BUT THERE'S A FLEET OF DROP SHIPS DIRECTLY OVERHEAD. FROM THE FLIGHT PATTERN I'D SAY THEY WERE K-CLASS.
"ACTUALLY, SCRATCH THAT. FROM THE DECEPTICONS JUMPING THROUGH THE AIR AND TURNING INTO BOMBS I'D SAY THEY WERE K-CLASS."
"—AND PRAY THEY'RE NOT AIMING FOR ANYONE IN PARTICULAR."
AAK!
EVERYONE SCATTER!
GET AS FAR AWAY FROM HERE AS YOU CAN—

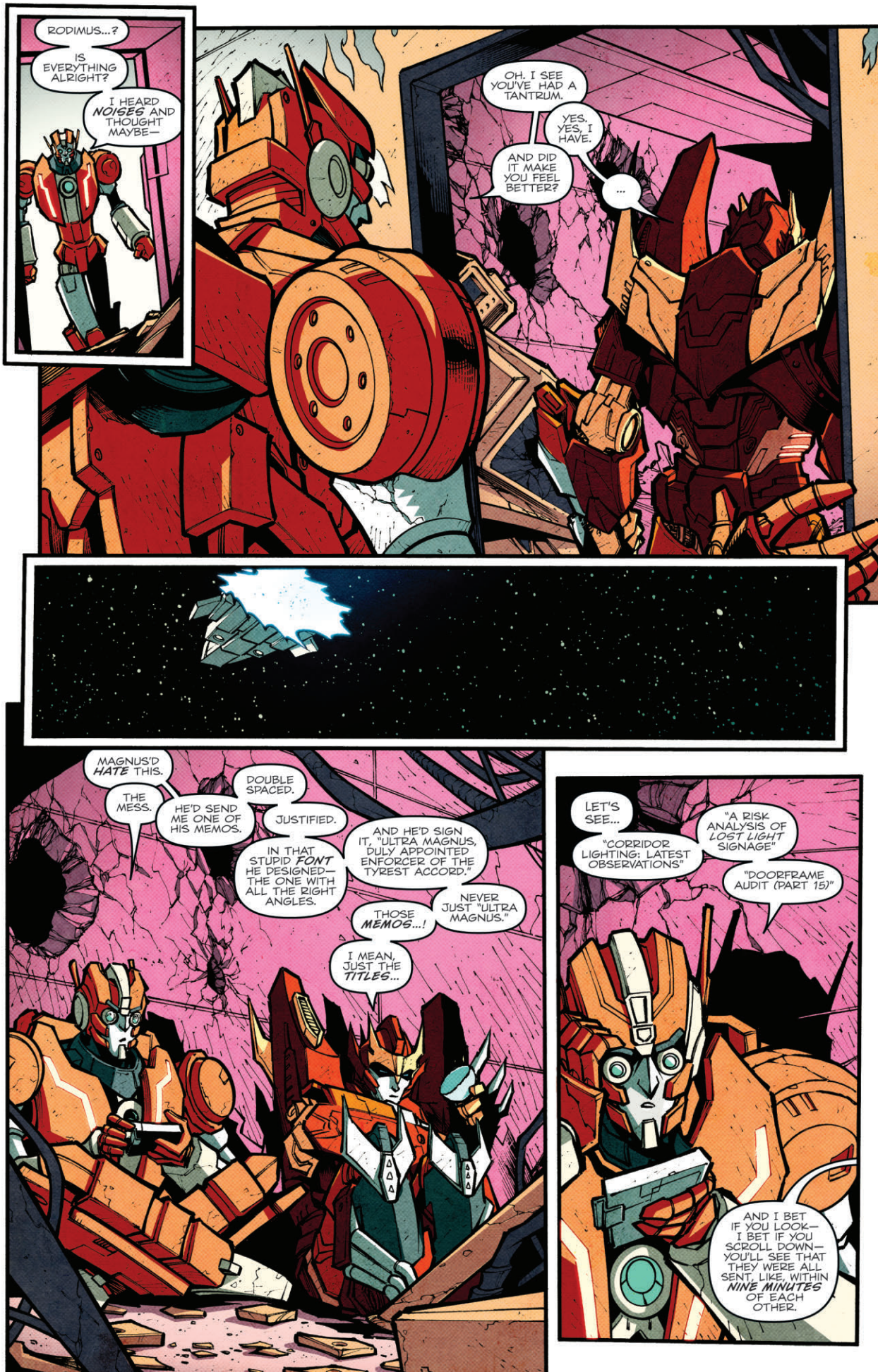

SIMANZI. FIVE MILES FROM THE CRUCIBLE. 1ST CYCLE 3178.
YUK.
THIS GLOOP HAS FORCED ITS WAY INTO CREVICES I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I HAD.
ROTORSTORM...
I KNOW, I KNOW.
LEAVE THE LIGHTHEARTED BANTER TO YOU.
WHATEVER THOSE THINGS WERE, WE'VE LOST THEM.
THEY'RE CALLED CYBERNAUGHTS, AND I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE. THEY'RE STEALTHIER THAN THEY LOOK...
...AND THEY'RE LIKELY TO BE EVERYWHERE.
MAGNUS!
SHOOM

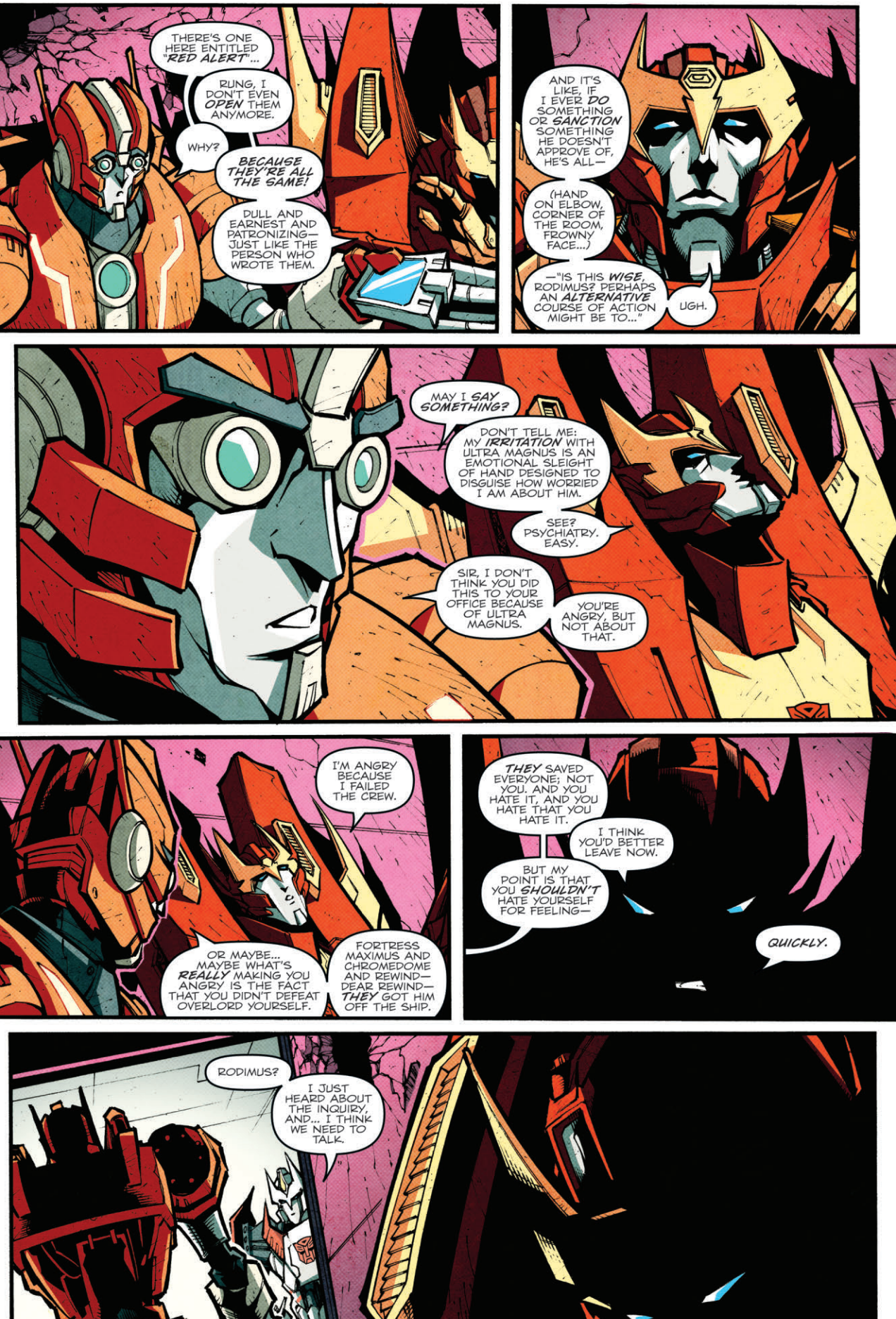

THE LOST LIGHT.
DEEP SPACE.
NOW.
I SAID TURN IT—
SWERVE!
PLEASE.
THE MEDIBAY.
THANK YOU.
IT'S HARD TO REATTACH SOMEONE'S LEGS WHEN ALL YOU CAN HEAR IS THE EMPYREAN SUITE.
IT'S ONE OF ULTRA MAGNUS'S FAVORITES.
I GUESS HE CAN OVERLOOK THE CONNOTATIONS.
WHICH IS FINE, EXCEPT HE CAN'T HEAR IT. HE CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING. HE CAN'T EVEN MOVE.
AND TAILGATE, I APPRECIATE WHAT YOU'RE— ACTUALLY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HE HATES DIRT.
WHAT'S WITH THE RED LIGHT, RATCHET?
IT TINGLES.
IT'S A DEATH CLOCK.
C'MON, DRIFT, KNOCK IT OFF...
WHAT'S A DEATH CLOCK?

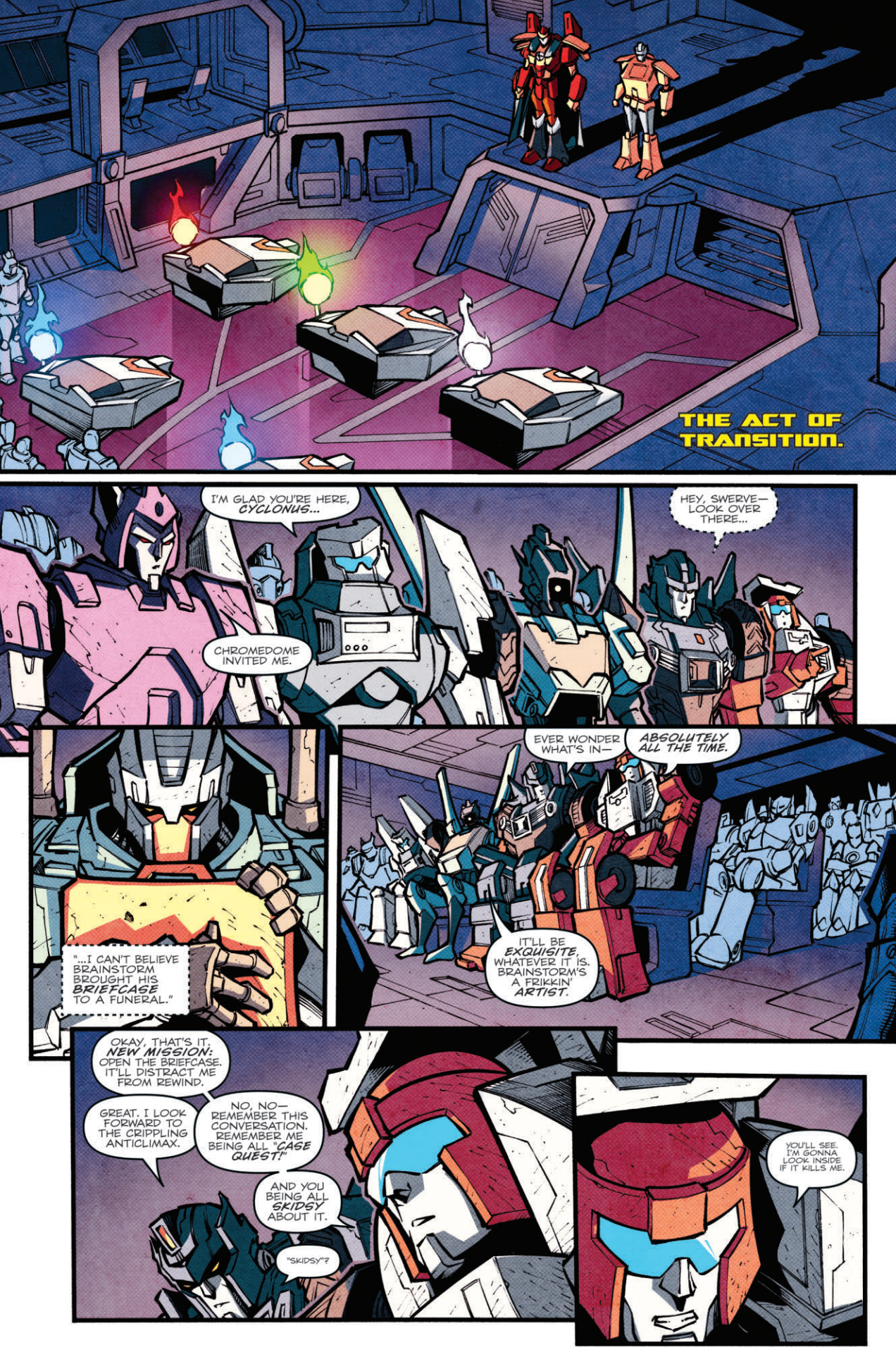

IT TELLS YOU HOW MUCH LONGER YOU'VE GOT TO LIVE, AND IT'S OBSCENE.
NO ONE SHOULD KNOW EXACTLY WHEN THEY'RE GOING TO DIE; NOT LIKE THAT; NOT TO THE NEAREST SECOND.
AT THE RISK OF SPARKING AN ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT, CERTAIN MACHINES—MACHINES LIKE THAT—ARE AN AFFRONT TO NATURE.
IT'S A MEDICAL INSTRUMENT. THAT'S ALL.
THE RED LIGHT'S A SCANNING FIELD THAT MEASURES SHRINKING SPARKS.
HEALTHY PATIENTS DON'T REGISTER—ONLY THE TERMINALLY ILL—BUT BY TRACKING THE RATE OF CONTRACTION THIS DEVICE CAN CALCULATE SOMEONE'S REMAINING LIFESPAN.
10:10:01:59
SEE? DAYS, HOURS, MINUTES, SECONDS.
THE READOUT WOULD TELL US IF THE PATIENT IS RESPONDING TO TREATMENT.
I'VE ONLY SEEN IT HAPPEN, WHAT, TWICE IN MY LIFETIME, BUT SOMETIMES YOU CAN ADD A FEW MORE DAYS TO THE CLOCK.
THAT'S IT, THEN. THAT'S THE PROGNOSIS: DEATH IN TEN DAYS, TWELVE IF WE'RE LUCKY.
NO LAST-MINUTE SAVES, NO MIRACLE CURES.
WE'RE ALL GONNA PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER AND GIVE UP.
LOOK, I KNOW YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, BUT—
YES!
YES, I DO!
BECAUSE IT'S NOT OKAY!
I KNOW "OKAY"—I SPECIALIZE IN "OKAY"—AND I CAN TELL YOU PRETTY EMPHATICALLY THAT NONE OF THIS—
NONE OF THIS BUSINESS WITH OVERLORD AND MAGNUS AND REWIND—
NONE OF THIS EVEN APPROACHES MY DEFINITION OF "OKAY"!
MAYBE YOU SHOULD SEE RUNG.
YOU COULD BE SUFFERING FROM SOME KIND OF STRESS-RELATED DISORDER...
I'M UPSET! DOESN'T ANYONE DO UPSET ANYMORE?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?
IS THIS A WAR THING?
SHH!
SORRY, TAILGATE, I JUST—I HEARD RODIMUS' VOICE ON THE INTERCOM—


"–HE PROMISED SOME BIG ANNOUNCEMENT..."
LET'S START WITH THE QUESTIONS– BECAUSE I KNOW EVERYONE HAS QUESTIONS.
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?
HOW DID OVERLORD ESCAPE A WHITEOUT VACUUM AND FIND HIS WAY ON BOARD?
"HOW DID HE BREAK INTO OUR HOME?
"AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL— WHO'S TO BLAME?
"QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS. WHICH IS WHY I INTEND TO HOLD AN INQUIRY INTO WHAT HAPPENED."
THERE YOU ARE.
WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU EVERYWHERE.
TRAILBREAKER– SORRY, TRAILCUTTER– SAID YOU MIGHT BE OUT HERE.
SAID YOU USED TO COME OUT HERE WITH...
...
HE SAID YOU USED TO COME OUT HERE.
"I WILL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS. YOU HAVE MY WORD."
CHROMEDOME?
"RODIMUS OUT."

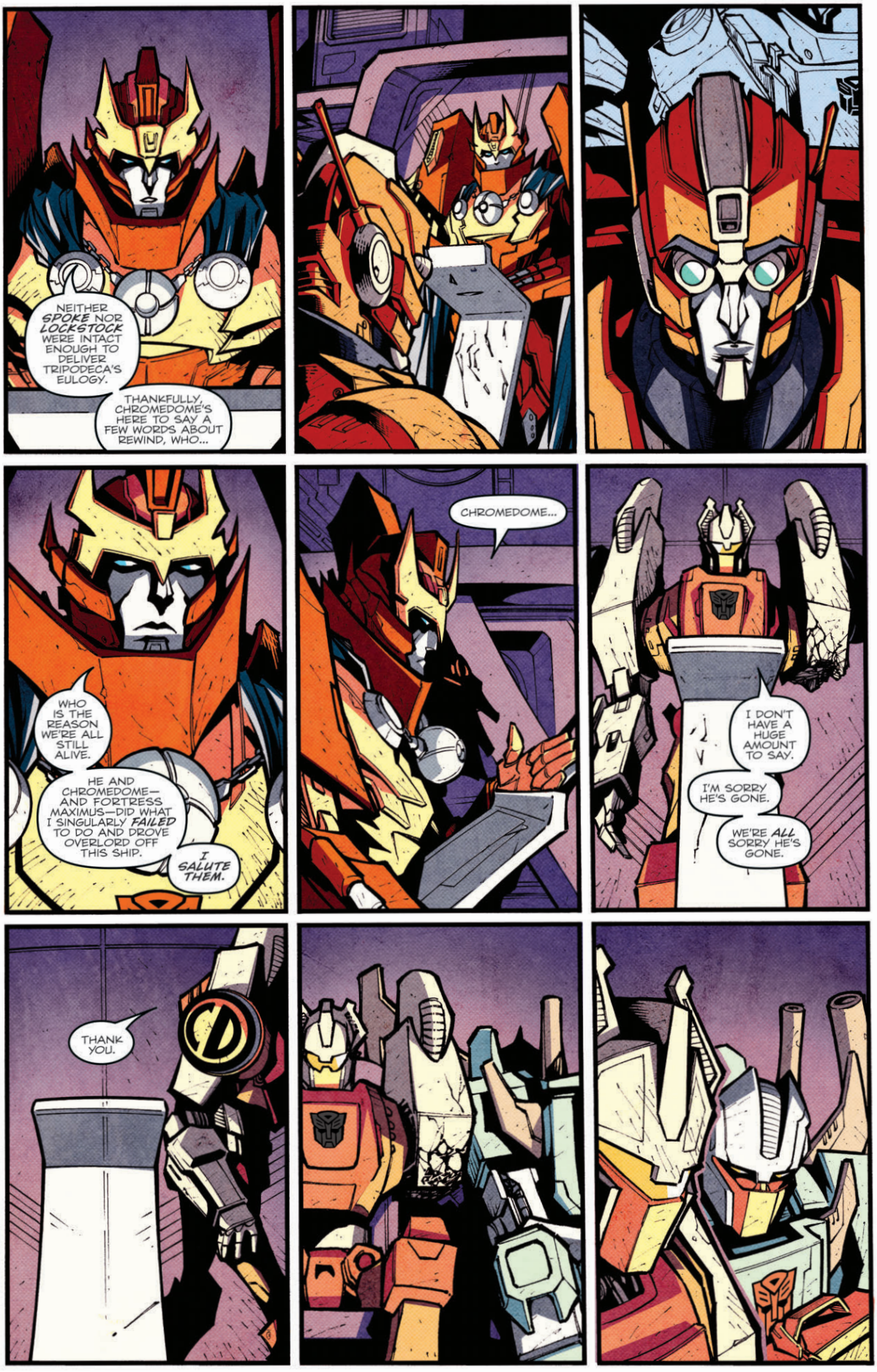

YES?
I—JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW YOU WERE DOING.
THANK YOU. I'M FINE.
I MEAN I'M NOT SAYING YOU HAVE TO *TALK* ABOUT IT OR ANYTHING, BUT—
NO, NO, I KNOW. I'M *FINE*. THANK YOU, SKIDS, BUT—I'M OKAY.
GENUINELY.
TRAILCUTTER'S *RIGHT*, YOU KNOW: REWIND AND I USED TO COME OUT HERE A LOT.
MAPPING THE CONSTELLATIONS...
HEH—THAT MAKES IT SOUND TOO GRAND. WE USED TO MAKE PICTURES WITH STARS.
OVER THERE—LOOK—WE HAVE THE *VIS VITALIS*.
AND THERE'S *PROWL* BEING HIT OVER THE HEAD BY A FUSION CANNON. WHACK!
I'M... STRUGGLING TO SEE THAT ONE.
YEAH, I JUST MADE THAT ONE UP FOR *OLD TIMES' SAKE*. PROWL BEING BATTERED WAS A REWIND SPECIAL.
PEOPLE REACT IN ALL SORTS OF WAYS, DON'T THEY.
TO THE DEATH OF A FRIEND.
I MEAN, I KNOW "FRIEND" DOESN'T REALLY DESCRIBE YOU AND REWIND, BUT—
LET'S TRY THIS AGAIN, SHALL WE?
CHROMEDOME, YOU ONCE TOLD ME THAT REWIND SAVED YOUR LIFE.
PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, I DON'T KNOW—IT SOUNDED LIKE BOTH.
AND WITH HIM GONE, I WAS WORRIED THAT—HONESTLY?
I WAS WORRIED YOU'D LOSE IT.
BUT IF YOU REALLY ARE OKAY THEN I'LL, ER... I GUESS I'LL LEAVE YOU BE.

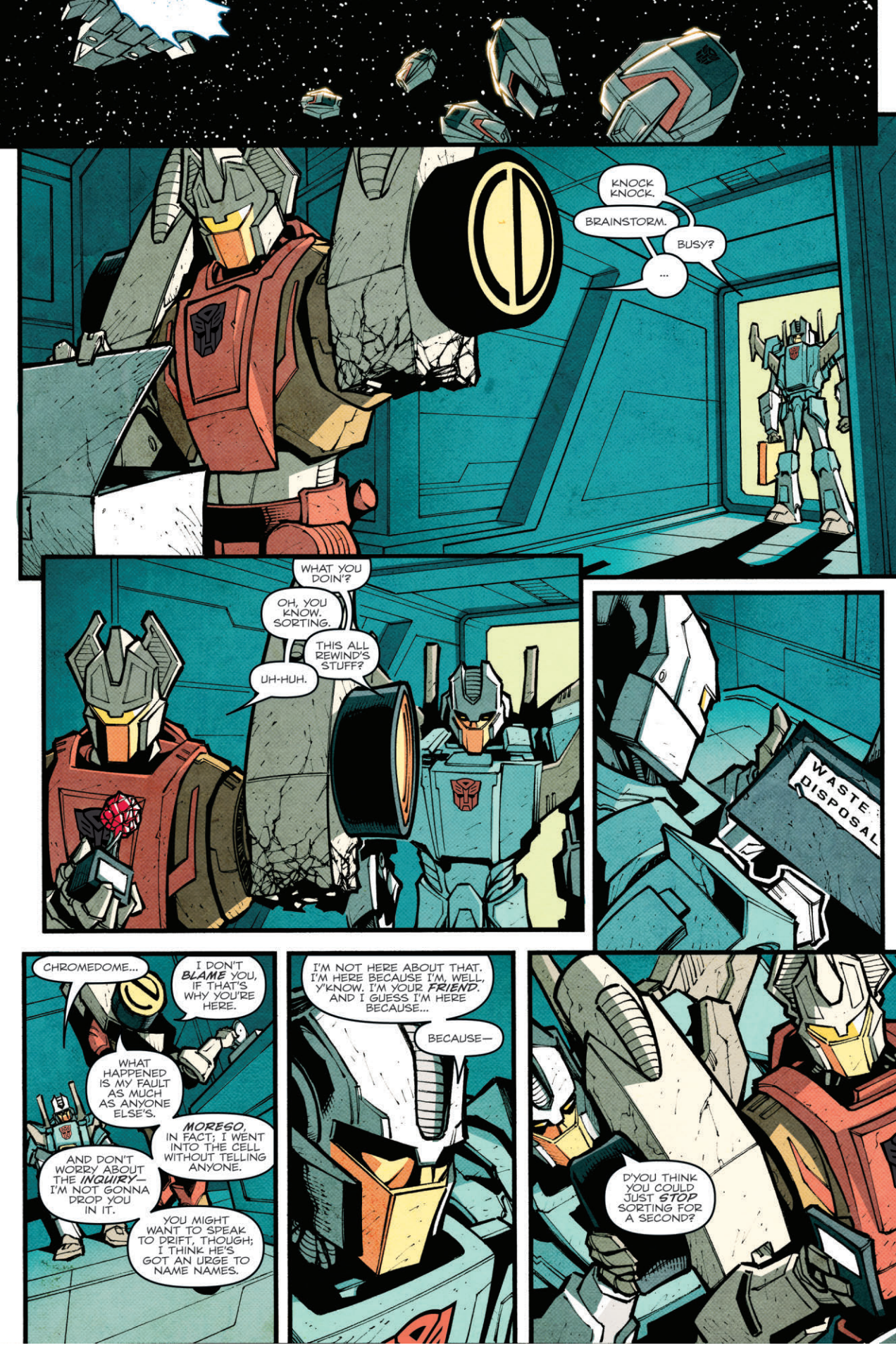

RODIMUS...?
IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT?
I HEARD NOISES AND THOUGHT MAYBE—
OH. I SEE YOU'VE HAD A TANTRUM.
YES. YES, I HAVE.
AND DID IT MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER?
...
MAGNUS'D HATE THIS.
THE MESS.
HE'D SEND ME ONE OF HIS MEMOS.
DOUBLE SPACED.
JUSTIFIED.
IN THAT STUPID FONT HE DESIGNED—THE ONE WITH ALL THE RIGHT ANGLES.
AND HE'D SIGN IT, "ULTRA MAGNUS, DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD."
NEVER JUST "ULTRA MAGNUS."
THOSE MEMOS...!
I MEAN, JUST THE TITLES...
LET'S SEE...
"CORRIDOR LIGHTING: LATEST OBSERVATIONS"
"A RISK ANALYSIS OF LOST LIGHT SIGNAGE"
"DOORFRAME AUDIT (PART 15)"
AND I BET IF YOU LOOK—I BET IF YOU SCROLL DOWN—YOU'LL SEE THAT THEY WERE ALL SENT, LIKE, WITHIN NINE MINUTES OF EACH OTHER.

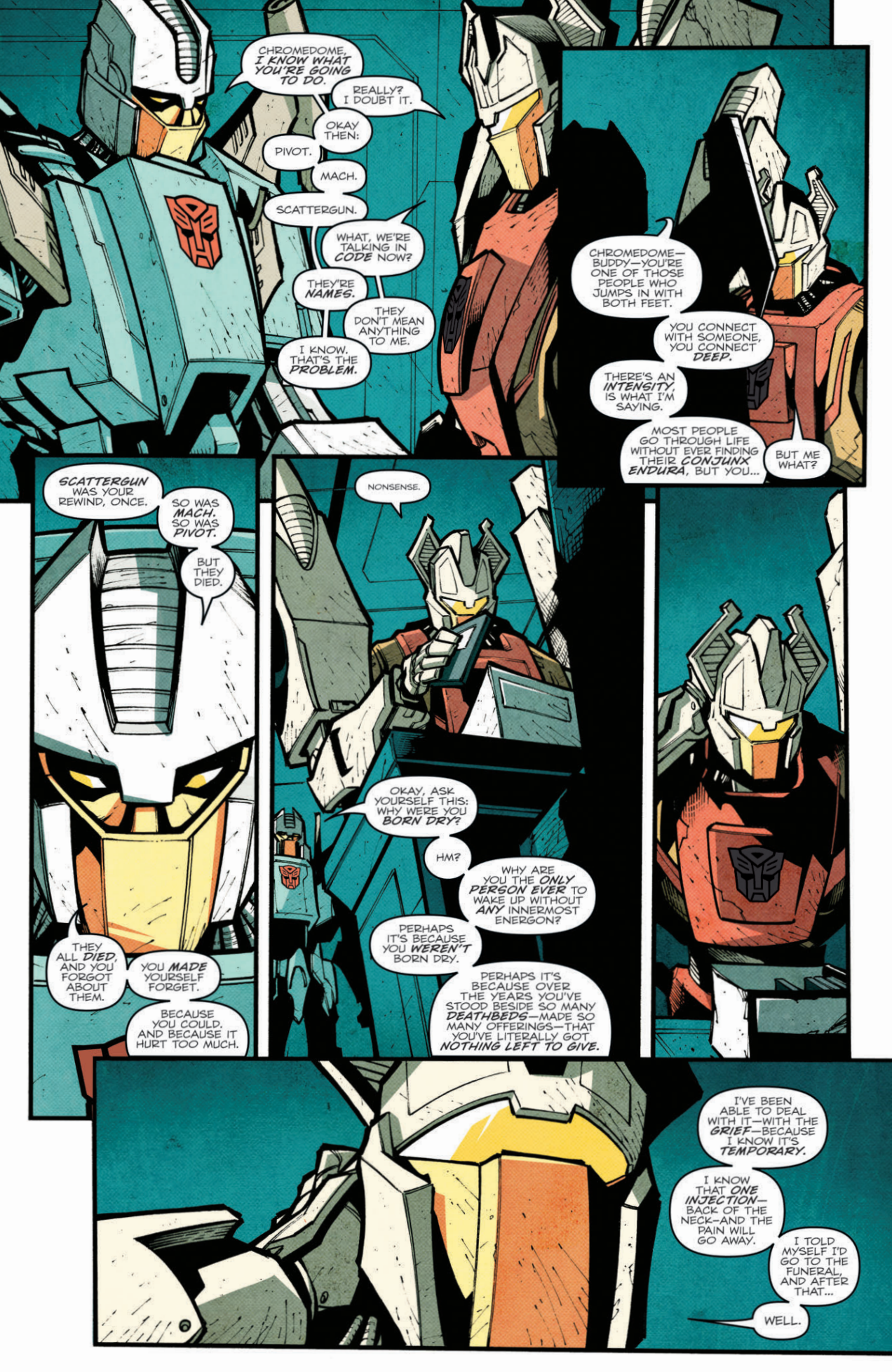

THERE'S ONE HERE ENTITLED "RED ALERT"...
RUNG, I DON'T EVEN OPEN THEM ANYMORE.
WHY?
BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL THE SAME!
DULL AND EARNEST AND PATRONIZING—JUST LIKE THE PERSON WHO WROTE THEM.
AND IT'S LIKE, IF I EVER DO SOMETHING OR SANCTION SOMETHING HE DOESN'T APPROVE OF, HE'S ALL—
(HAND ON ELBOW, CORNER OF THE ROOM, FROWNY FACE...)
—"IS THIS WISE, RODIMUS? PERHAPS AN ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION MIGHT BE TO..."
UGH.
MAY I SAY SOMETHING?
DON'T TELL ME: MY IRRITATION WITH ULTRA MAGNUS IS AN EMOTIONAL SLEIGHT OF HAND DESIGNED TO DISGUISE HOW WORRIED I AM ABOUT HIM.
SEE? PSYCHIATRY. EASY.
SIR, I DON'T THINK YOU DID THIS TO YOUR OFFICE BECAUSE OF ULTRA MAGNUS.
YOU'RE ANGRY, BUT NOT ABOUT THAT.
I'M ANGRY BECAUSE I FAILED THE CREW.
OR MAYBE... MAYBE WHAT'S REALLY MAKING YOU ANGRY IS THE FACT THAT YOU DIDN'T DEFEAT OVERLORD YOURSELF.
FORTRESS MAXIMUS AND CHROMEDOME AND REWIND—DEAR REWIND—THEY GOT HIM OFF THE SHIP.
THEY SAVED EVERYONE; NOT YOU. AND YOU HATE IT, AND YOU HATE THAT YOU HATE IT.
I THINK YOU'D BETTER LEAVE NOW.
BUT MY POINT IS THAT YOU SHOULDN'T HATE YOURSELF FOR FEELING—
QUICKLY.
RODIMUS?
I JUST HEARD ABOUT THE INQUIRY, AND... I THINK WE NEED TO TALK.

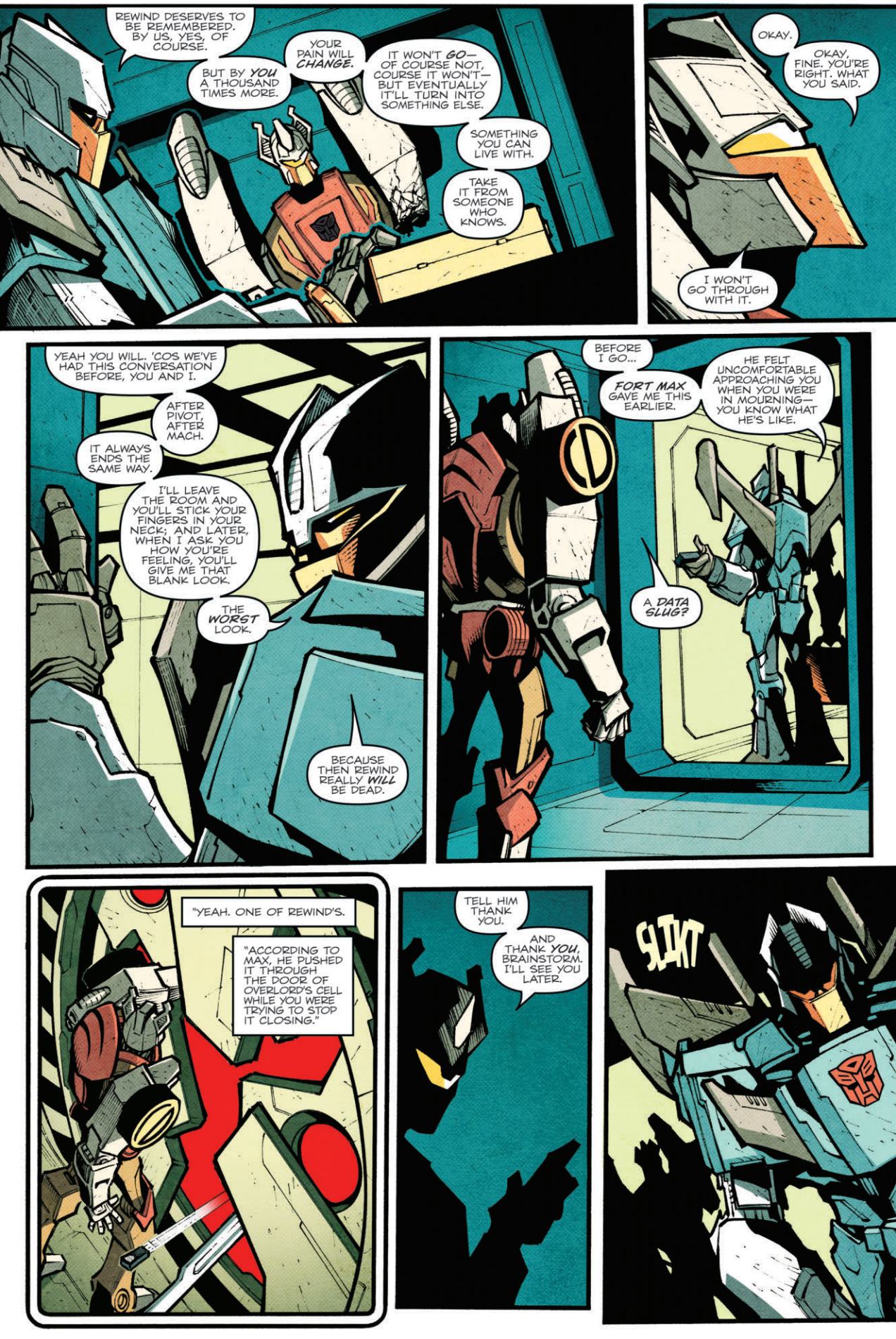

THE ACT OF TRANSITION.
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, CYCLONUS...
CHROMEDOME INVITED ME.
HEY, SWERVE— LOOK OVER THERE...
"...I CAN'T BELIEVE BRAINSTORM BROUGHT HIS BRIEFCASE TO A FUNERAL."
EVER WONDER WHAT'S IN—
ABSOLUTELY ALL THE TIME.
IT'LL BE EXQUISITE, WHATEVER IT IS. BRAINSTORM'S A FRIKKIN' ARTIST.
OKAY, THAT'S IT. NEW MISSION: OPEN THE BRIEFCASE. IT'LL DISTRACT ME FROM REWIND.
GREAT. I LOOK FORWARD TO THE CRIPPLING ANTICLIMAX.
NO, NO— REMEMBER THIS CONVERSATION. REMEMBER ME BEING ALL "CASE QUEST!"
AND YOU BEING ALL SKIDSY ABOUT IT.
"SKIDSY"?
YOU'LL SEE. I'M GONNA LOOK INSIDE IF IT KILLS ME.

—CAN I SAY ABOUT HIM THAT HASN'T BEEN SAID BEFORE BY HIS FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS—MANY OF WHOM ARE HERE TODAY?
FOR SOMEONE SO *SMALL* HE MADE A HUGE IMPACT ON THOSE AROUND HIM.
AND ALTHOUGH HE HAD AN INEFFECTUAL ALT MODE, HE NEVER SHIED AWAY FROM BATTLE.
IN FACT, HE WAS AS BRAVE AN AUTOBOT AS ANY I HAVE MET.
HE WAS CHEERFUL AND KINDHEARTED, AND I COULD TALK ABOUT HIM ALL DAY AND STILL FAIL TO DO HIM JUSTICE.
SUFFICE TO SAY THAT EVERYONE WHO MET HIM WAS *IMPROVED* BY THE EXPERIENCE.
*TRIPODECA* OF IACON MINOR, YOUR LIGHT WILL FOREVER REACH THOSE YOU LEFT BEHIND.
I COMMEND YOUR SPARK TO THE ALLSPARK AND THE ALLSPARK IS ONE SPARK AND THE ONE SPARK IS YOUR SPARK AND IN THIS WAY WE ARE ALL CONNECTED.
AND IN THIS WAY WE ARE ALL CONNECTED.


NEITHER SPOKE NOR LOCKSTOCK WERE INTACT ENOUGH TO DELIVER TRIPODECA'S EULOGY.
THANKFULLY, CHROMEDOME'S HERE TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT REWIND, WHO...
WHO IS THE REASON WE'RE ALL STILL ALIVE.
HE AND CHROMEDOME—AND FORTRESS MAXIMUS—DID WHAT I SINGULARLY FAILED TO DO AND DROVE OVERLORD OFF THIS SHIP.
I SALUTE THEM.
CHROMEDOME...
I DON'T HAVE A HUGE AMOUNT TO SAY.
I'M SORRY HE'S GONE.
WE'RE ALL SORRY HE'S GONE.
THANK YOU.


KNOCK KNOCK.
BRAINSTORM.
BUSY?
...
WHAT YOU DOIN'?
OH, YOU KNOW. SORTING.
THIS ALL REWIND'S STUFF?
UH-HUH.
WASTE DISPOSAL
CHROMEDOME...
I DON'T *BLAME* YOU, IF THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE.
WHAT HAPPENED IS MY FAULT AS MUCH AS ANYONE ELSE'S.
*MORESO*, IN FACT; I WENT INTO THE CELL WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE.
AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE *INQUIRY*— I'M NOT GONNA DROP YOU IN IT.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO SPEAK TO DRIFT, THOUGH; I THINK HE'S GOT AN URGE TO NAME NAMES.
I'M NOT HERE ABOUT THAT. I'M HERE BECAUSE I'M, WELL, Y'KNOW. I'M YOUR *FRIEND*. AND I GUESS I'M HERE BECAUSE...
BECAUSE—
D'YOU THINK YOU COULD JUST *STOP* SORTING FOR A SECOND?


CHROMEDOME, I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO.
REALLY? I DOUBT IT.
OKAY THEN:
PIVOT.
MACH.
SCATTERGUN.
WHAT, WE'RE TALKING IN CODE NOW?
THEY'RE NAMES.
THEY DON'T MEAN ANYTHING TO ME.
I KNOW. THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
CHROMEDOME—BUDDY—YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO JUMPS IN WITH BOTH FEET.
YOU CONNECT WITH SOMEONE, YOU CONNECT DEEP.
THERE'S AN INTENSITY, IS WHAT I'M SAYING.
MOST PEOPLE GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT EVER FINDING THEIR CONJUNX ENDURA, BUT YOU...
BUT ME WHAT?
SCATTERGUN WAS YOUR REWIND, ONCE.
SO WAS MACH. SO WAS PIVOT.
BUT THEY DIED.
NONSENSE.
OKAY, ASK YOURSELF THIS: WHY WERE YOU BORN DRY?
HM?
WHY ARE YOU THE ONLY PERSON EVER TO WAKE UP WITHOUT ANY INNERMOST ENERGON?
PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T BORN DRY.
PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE OVER THE YEARS YOU'VE STOOD BESIDE SO MANY DEATHBEDS—MADE SO MANY OFFERINGS—THAT YOU'VE LITERALLY GOT NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE.
THEY ALL DIED, AND YOU FORGOT ABOUT THEM.
YOU MADE YOURSELF FORGET.
BECAUSE YOU COULD. AND BECAUSE IT HURT TOO MUCH.
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DEAL WITH IT—WITH THE GRIEF—BECAUSE I KNOW IT'S TEMPORARY.
I KNOW THAT ONE INJECTION—BACK OF THE NECK—AND THE PAIN WILL GO AWAY.
I TOLD MYSELF I'D GO TO THE FUNERAL, AND AFTER THAT...
WELL.

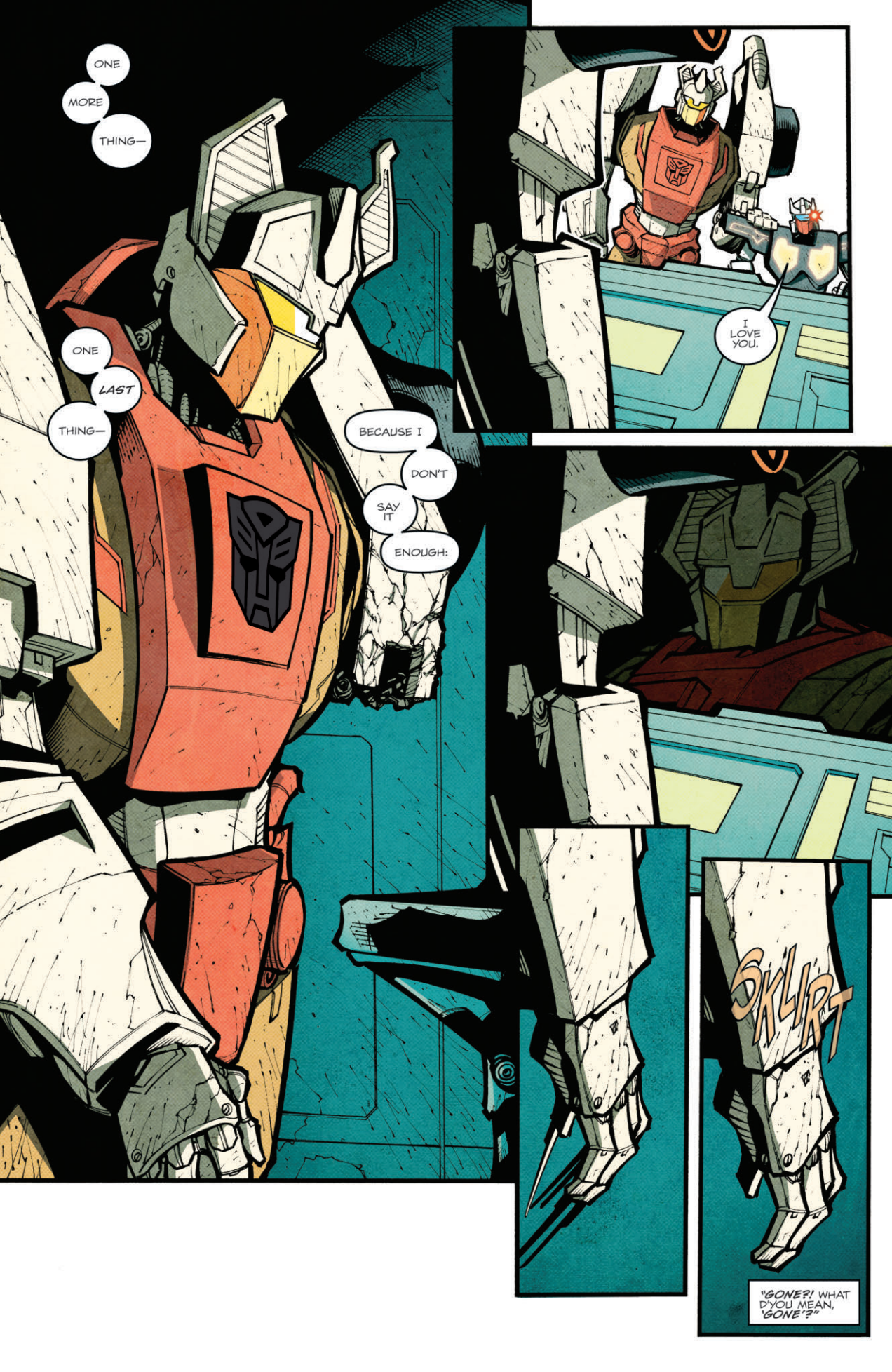

REWIND DESERVES TO BE REMEMBERED. BY US, YES, OF COURSE.
BUT BY YOU A THOUSAND TIMES MORE.
YOUR PAIN WILL CHANGE.
IT WON'T GO— OF COURSE NOT, COURSE IT WON'T— BUT EVENTUALLY IT'LL TURN INTO SOMETHING ELSE.
SOMETHING YOU CAN LIVE WITH.
TAKE IT FROM SOMEONE WHO KNOWS.
OKAY.
OKAY, FINE. YOU'RE RIGHT. WHAT YOU SAID.
I WON'T GO THROUGH WITH IT.
YEAH YOU WILL. 'COS WE'VE HAD THIS CONVERSATION BEFORE, YOU AND I.
AFTER PIVOT, AFTER MACH.
IT ALWAYS ENDS THE SAME WAY.
I'LL LEAVE THE ROOM AND YOU'LL STICK YOUR FINGERS IN YOUR NECK; AND LATER, WHEN I ASK YOU HOW YOU'RE FEELING, YOU'LL GIVE ME THAT BLANK LOOK.
THE WORST LOOK.
BECAUSE THEN REWIND REALLY WILL BE DEAD.
BEFORE I GO...
FORT MAX GAVE ME THIS EARLIER.
HE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE APPROACHING YOU WHEN YOU WERE IN MOURNING— YOU KNOW WHAT HE'S LIKE.
A DATA SLUG?
"YEAH. ONE OF REWIND'S.
"ACCORDING TO MAX, HE PUSHED IT THROUGH THE DOOR OF OVERLORD'S CELL WHILE YOU WERE TRYING TO STOP IT CLOSING."
TELL HIM THANK YOU.
AND THANK YOU, BRAINSTORM. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
SLIKT

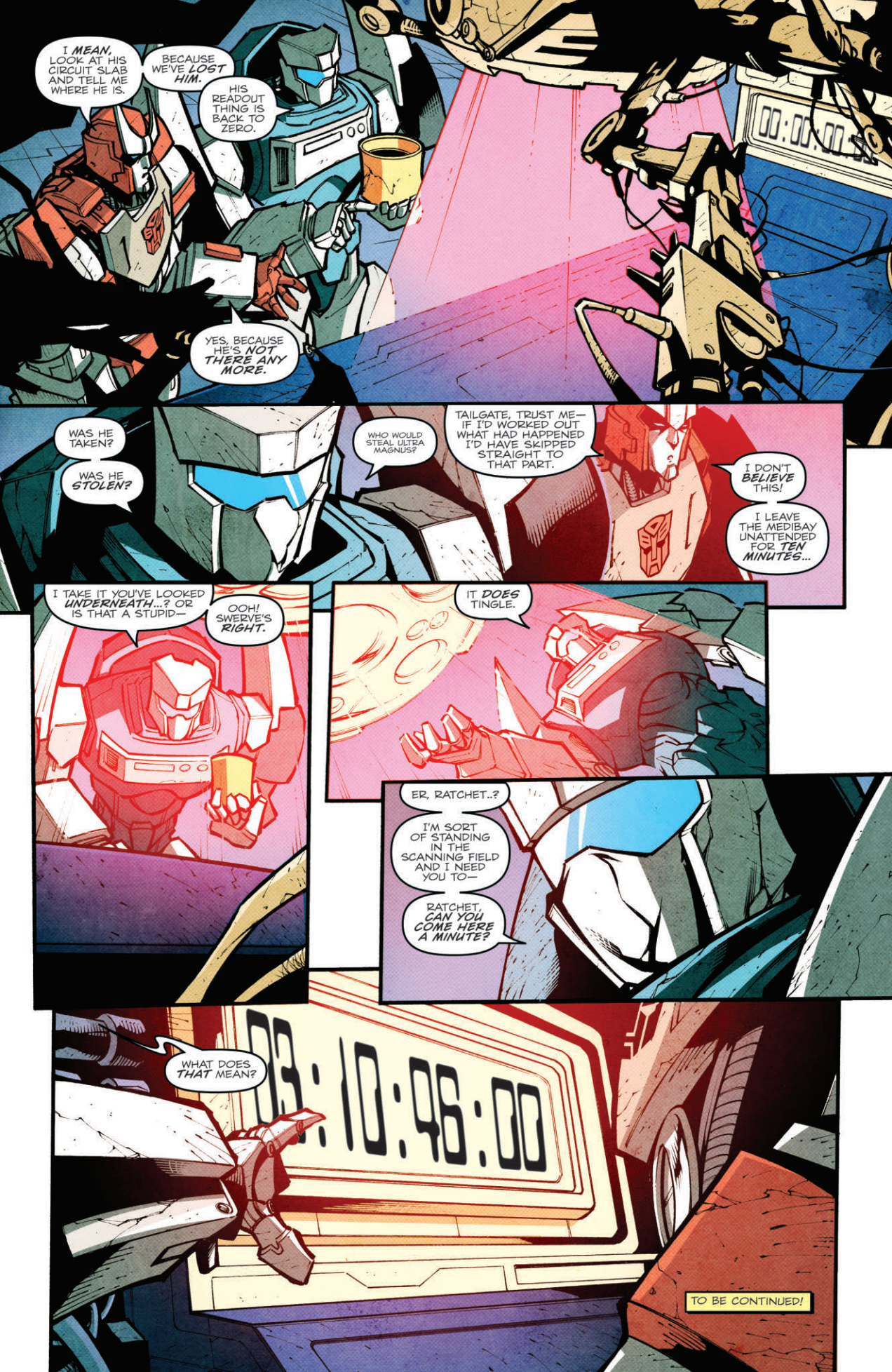
SHUTTLE BAY 1.
IT GIVES ME NO PLEASURE TO STAND HERE, IN FRONT OF YOU ALL, AND SAY WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY.
BUT I PROMISED YOU AN INQUIRY; I SAID I WOULD FIND OUT HOW OVERLORD GOT ON BOARD, AND WHO WAS TO BLAME.
A FEW HOURS AGO, DRIFT ADMITTED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT HAPPENED.
IT SEEMS AS IF, PRIOR TO TAKE OFF, AND WITH THE HELP OF THE DUOBOTS, HE WAS ABLE TO ATTACH OVERLORD'S CELL ONTO THE SHIP.
HE'D HOPED WE COULD USE HIM TO MAKE OUR OWN PHASE SIXERS—AND YES, I KNOW THE WAR'S OVER, BUT HE SAYS HE WAS PREPARING FOR THE WORST.
"HE ACCEPTS THAT HE ACTED IRRESPONSIBLY...
"...EVEN IF IT WAS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE AUTOBOT CAUSE."
AND IF IT SOUNDS AS IF I'M DEFENDING HIM, I'M NOT. I'M APPALLED AT WHAT HE'S DONE.
HE SAYS HE WILL ACCEPT WHATEVER PUNISHMENT I DEEM APPROPRIATE.
DRIFT, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY BEFORE I STRIP YOU OF YOUR AUTOBRAND AND ORDER YOU TO LEAVE THE SHIP?
NO, CAPTAIN.
IN THAT CASE—
RRRIP
—I HEREBY REVOKE THE RITE OF AUTOBRAND AND CAST YOU OUT.
A SHUTTLE HAS BEEN PREPARED. YOU LEAVE IMMEDIATELY.

KLUNK
Detect
Messa
SHOWING YOU EDITED FOOTAGE FROM
INS
MY
DATABASE.
I'VE PROBABLY GOT ABOUT N—
GAME OVER
SO HERE
ME OUT!
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN
APART
STRIKES ME AS INTENSELY WRONG.
SO PROMISE ME SOMETHING:
BE BRAVE. BE STRONG. AND

ing content
ge begins...
YOUR ATTENTION FOR A MOMENT.
THIS IS
REWIND
OUGHT
POINT
EIGHT SECONDS
BEFORE
TERRIFIED THAT YOU'D
DIE!
BEFORE I DID.
BECAUSE YOU AND ME
KEEP GOING WITHOUT ME.
AND ANOTHER THING: NO MORE
INJECTING—
IT WILL KILL YOU.
AND REMEMBER:

YOU
DESERVE
TO BE
HAPPY...
THE NEW
INSTITUTE
WAS
THE OLD YOU
YOU'RE
A BETTER PERSON
NOW—
STUBBORN AND
FRUSTRATING
BUT
WONDERFUL!
AND TO THINK—
I WILL NEVER
SEE YOU AGAIN


ONE MORE THING—
I LOVE YOU.
ONE LAST THING—
BECAUSE I DON'T SAY IT ENOUGH:
SKLIRT
"GONE?! WHAT D'YOU MEAN, 'GONE'?"


I MEAN, LOOK AT HIS CIRCUIT SLAB AND TELL ME WHERE HE IS.
BECAUSE WE'VE LOST HIM.
HIS READOUT THING IS BACK TO ZERO.
YES, BECAUSE HE'S NOT THERE ANY MORE.
WAS HE TAKEN?
WAS HE STOLEN?
WHO WOULD STEAL ULTRA MAGNUS?
TAILGATE, TRUST ME— IF I'D WORKED OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED I'D HAVE SKIPPED STRAIGHT TO THAT PART.
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
I LEAVE THE MEDIBAY UNATTENDED FOR TEN MINUTES...
I TAKE IT YOU'VE LOOKED UNDERNEATH...? OR IS THAT A STUPID—
OOH! SWERVE'S RIGHT.
IT DOES TINGLE.
ER, RATCHET..?
I'M SORT OF STANDING IN THE SCANNING FIELD AND I NEED YOU TO—
RATCHET, CAN YOU COME HERE A MINUTE?
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
03:10:96:00
TO BE CONTINUED!

**RODIMUS**
**Captain of the Lost Light**
Hat-hater and compulsive doodler. Self-confident, irresponsible and reckless; admired despite (and because of) those qualities.

**ULTRA MAGNUS**
**Second in command**
Laid back, wisecracking, fun-loving: no one on board the Lost Light has ever used those words to describe Ultra Magnus.

**DRIFT**
**Nominal third in command**
Your archetypal Syk-addict-turned-Decepticon-psychopath-turned-Autobot-ninja-turned-flaky spiritualist.

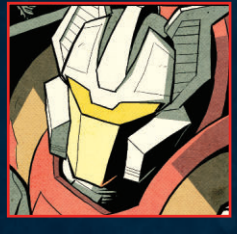
**BRAINSTORM**
**Gun nut**
Briefcase-carrying egotist, coward and conflicted Perceptor fanboy. Motto: see a trigger, squeeze a trigger.

**TRAILCUTTER**
**"Mr. Forcefield"**
Outwardly chipper ambient warrior with self-identity issues and a fuel intake moderator chip that burnt out years ago.

**FORTRESS MAXIMUS**
**Prison warden**
Garrus 9 survivor and erstwhile hostage-taker with guns in his legs and everything.

**WHIRL**
**Unvincible [sic]**
Sociopathic empurata victim making his way in a world that's just asking for a punch in the face. No known weaknesses, apparently.

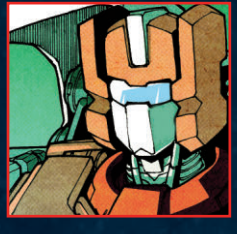
**RATCHET**
**Chief Medical Officer**
Acerbic arch-rationalist with a kind heart and second-hand hands. Doesn't suffer fools gladly. Realizes the irony of this, given where he's found himself.



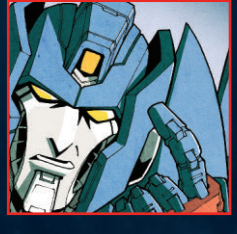
**CHROMEDOME**
**Lamentatorem**
Recently-bereaved ex-mnemosurgeon haunted by the things he did and didn't do.

**PERCEPTOR**
**Chief Scientific Officer**
A brush with death awakened his inner sniper. Never uses a single word when a dozen will do.

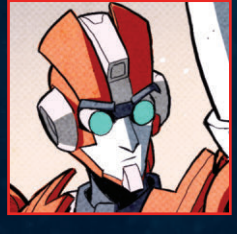
**SWERVE**
**Proprietor of "Swerve's"**
Part-time prankster, full-time bartender, and one-time metallurgist. On an epic quest to find a roommate. Makes jokes, not friends.



**FIRST AID**
**Chief Medical Officer in training**
Card-carrying Wreckers fan, occasional diarist and inventor of the spark jumpstarting technique.



**SKIDS**
**Theoretician/diplomat/master of metallikato/etc.**
Amnesiac super-learner and lapsed Primalist who finds himself just as incongrous as you do.



**RUNG**
**Psychiatrist**
A surprisingly resilient, softly-spoken model-maker and unobtrusive historical constant.

**CYCLONUS**
**Warrior**
Mono-horned social outcast known for belting out Old Cybertronian folk songs and staring moodily into the middle distance.

**TAILGATE**
**Sluicer (fourth class)**
Naïve, panicky fabulist with everything to prove. Trusting but clingy. Bad speller. Favorite night: movie night.

☐ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #12 COVER RI

by **CASEY W. COLLER** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**

□ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #13 COVER RI

by **MARCELO MATERE**

☐MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #14 COVER RI

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by **MARCELO MATERE**

THE TRANSFORMERS
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

# SIGNAL TO NOISE

*(A **Lost Light** Interlude)*

Rung stepped out of the elevator 20 floors earlier than intended, his nascent claustrophobia getting the better of him. It was quiet, and that didn't help either. It was never quiet aboard the *Lost Light*. Not *this* quiet. Not the kind of quiet that forced you to listen to your inner workings—to the sound your body made as it struggled, hour after hour, to keep you upright and alive.

Rung, who had been around for a long time, knew his somatic soundtrack better than most. He knew, for example, that if he was to direct his audio sensors fully inwards he'd hear a muffled cacophany of moving parts: a thousand keys turning in a thousand locks. He often wondered why more Cybertronians didn't collapse in awe at the miracle that was their body. Surely if you ever stopped and stood and studied yourself—the way you worked—the way all those little pieces inside you lunged and spun and spinnied—you'd fall to your knees, humbled by the sheer audacity of mechanical life.

He'd always remained true to his original design, eyebrows and all. Mode fidelity, they called it. Not for him the redesign or the remould—he looked today as he had always looked. Perhaps that was why everyone seemed to look past him; why he so consistently failed to register: he was so unchanging he'd become part of the landscape.

While he had stayed the same, his friends had grown in size. In a post-Functionist society where your body was your primary weapon, size was everthing—at least until you become so energon-hungry that you could barely make it from one mode to the next without seizing up. But until that critical threshold was crossed—and some people reached it sooner than others—every upgrade was an exercise in accretion and accession and the annexing of surrounding space.

Back on Kimia he'd written a monograph on the relationship between war and body size and then promptly filed it away with all the others, never to be circulated. His time as a psychiatrist of note was long gone; he knew that. Rival practitioners such as Froid may've been long dead, but the damage they'd inflicted on his reputation was irreperable.

The thought made him quicken his pace, as if he was afraid that the past would catch up with him. The gears in his legs screeched in protest, which only made him more anxious. Like all Cybertronians of a certain age, his visits to the medibay were triggered not by an uncomfortable sensation, but by an unfamiliar sound—cogs refusing to mesh, an intransigent axle, a screw too slow on the turn. He knew, however, that his anxiety was misplaced. After six weeks in the medibay—six weeks recovering from that short, sharp shot to the head—he was in better shape than ever.

He remembered very little about the moments leading up to his hospitalization, and the few details that he could recall were thin and brittle and prone to fragmentation: his arm around Fortress Maximus; Overlord's preternaturally expressive lips; a dash of light and a wink of shattered glass.

Six weeks later, when he'd woken up on the circuit slab and opened his new eyes for the first time, he'd not recognized the people standing around his circuit slab; or rather, he'd not recognized them as people. As far as he was concerned, Skids, Swerve, and Whirl were indistinguishable from the rest of the medibay (a common side-effect of brain injury). With First Aid's patient tuition he was eventually able to separate people from their surroundings—that was the first breakthrough; the second was learning to move again, and for that he had Swerve to thank.

He'd been shown footage of the metallurgist perched on a barstool by his circuit slab, his legs at right angles to his body, and talking to him, nonstop, for 147 hours. He couldn't remember a single word of what was said (apparently it was mostly about Blurr), but Swerve's incessant talking had elicited a response. During the 147th hour, a twitch in his right hand had blossomed into a loose and languid gesture: slowly, tenatively, Rung had unfurled his forefinger and placed it delicately over his lips.

Not long after that, he'd been transferred to a sedentary circuit slab—Hound called them "wheelchairs"—and treated to a series of stories emceed by Rewind. Again, he knew this only in retrospect: at the time, he was buried too deep in the landslide of his own thoughts to make sense of what was going outside the rubble. In fact, aside from the smile on Skids' face when he'd corrected the persistent mispronunciation of his name, his one abiding memory of those lost days, strangely enough, was of the neat rows of bottled engex lined up behind Swerve's bar.

After the recent battle on Temptoria, which he'd been forced to sit out (something for which he was secretly grateful), he'd been invited to help Brainstorm make the holomatter avatars more energy-efficient. This had proved impossible, even for Brainstorm (an Autobot who insisted that Perceptor had once offered him a billion shanix for his brain), so they settled on creating "super-intuitive avatars" instead. A literal projection of the Cybertronian psyche, SIAs could be deployed over longer distances than their precursors—and the hair looked more convincing.

They'd tested the new SIAs during the recent trip to Hedonia. And it had been in a badly lit

Hedonian gift shop that Rung had realized that he'd done something bad. No, something awful. He'd done to someone what everyone else always did to him: he'd forgotten about them.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

"Why are we wasting our time in a gift shop," said Tailgate, "when we could be wasting our time not in a gift shop?"

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Skids reached for another hat and frowned. "How can someone who spent six million years in a cave complain of being bored? Hm?" He found his face in the mirror and adjusted the hat. "Anyway, no-one's forcing you to browse. Forced browsing is not the Autobot way. Wait outside."

"I'm not going outside by myself—Nutjob's out there."

"So?"

"So he knows I'm easily led. He'll talk me into assassinating Rodimus or swapping my Transformation Cog for a hand grenade or something. And to be honest, I'm starting to think—and don't you dare tell him this—but I'm starting to think he's not stable."

They looked down the aisle, between the shelves filled with souvenirs for the indiscriminate pleasure-seeker (everything from hypersensitive bodysuits to mouth food to elixirs laced with dopamine) and saw Whirl gently banging his head against the glass. Tap. Tap. Tap.

"We should count ourselves lucky," said Rewind, as he and Rung leaned in to see what the others were looking at. "When he's bored he tends to shoot someone. He's not allowed in museums because people end up dead."

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Rung shook his head sadly. "Poor thing. He's trying to relieve the pressure on the part of his brain that he blames for his unpredictable behavior."

"I'm pretty sure Chromedome would tell you it doesn't work like that," said Rewind.

"I'm sure he would. But if Whirl wants to *think* it works like that, we should let him."

Skids jabbed Rung playfully on the shoulder. "You alright, Eyebrows?"

"Not really, no. I feel guilty about leaving Swerve to handle Ultra Magnus. Do you think he'll be able to calm him down?"

"Calm him down?" Rewind muttered, fiddling with his head-mounted videocamera. "You think we're really in trouble?"

"Well, let's see," said Skids, folding his arms. "We allowed Whirl to intoxicate to the point of temporary shutdown the galaxy's least forgiving law enforcer…Of course we're in trouble! We're in a rich tapestry of trouble! We're in shades of trouble so subtle and multifaceted that you probably have to take several steps back to fully appreciate the breadth and scale of the trouble we're in."

Tailgate snapped his fingers. "Let's run away. Let's join the Cosmic Carnival and get into scrapes."

"If Magnus is going to arrest us and put all our sparks in the naughty jar, then maybe we *should* get out and about," said Rewind, tapping the chronometer on his wrist. "We've only got half an hour before the shuttle leaves. Half an hour to uncover the dark secret at the heart of Hedonia..."

"Dark secret?" said Skids approvingly. "Tell me more."

"I'm just guessing," admitted Rewind, "but—look outside. The smiling tourists, the friendly locals, the overwhelming sense of contentment and bonhomie. There's always a dark and horrific secret in places like this."

Rung raised a perfectly rectangular eyebrow. "You're saying the more outwardly peaceable and well-adjusted a society, the greater the likelihood—"

"Of it having a sinister underbelly. Yup."

Skids shook his head. "Even Lovetopia, off Regel VII?"

"Lovetopia? Please. The Lovetopian elite were selling the lower classes to the Macerators. The 'magic ingredient' in every pint of Yum Yum juice? An impoverished family of six."

"Cuddlex, in the Benevolon Sector?"

"A wonderful place for a vacation—*if* you ignore the fact that they breed haemoslaves to fight in service to the Antigod. And don't even get me started on the living hell that is Giggleopolis."

"Hold on everyone," said Tailgate, balancing a shelf to get a better view of the street outside. "Where's Whirl gone?"

"Beats me," said Skids. "But look who's just turned up."

Cyclonus entered the shop and acknowledged Tailgate with a nod so subtle it could have been a trick of the light, He proceeded to stalk the aisles, picking things up, turning them over, frowning at them, and putting them down again.

"He can't afford anything," concluded Skids.

"No, no, he's loaded," said Tailgate. "He's, like, a multi-billionaire or something. Tetrahexian real estate. No, he just thinks possessions are a weakness. Actually, he thinks everything's a weakness. I like him, but he's phenomenally stern."

"He's humming," whispered Rung, picking up a model spaceship rather than glance in Cyclonus' direction.

"It must be the browsing," said Skids. "It pacifies him. Maybe that's where we've been going wrong all these years: rather than trying to defeat the Decepticons using force, we should've taken them shopping."

"Firstly, he's not a Decepticon," said Tailgate. "And secondly, why are you obsessed with browsing?"

Rung smiled and left them to it, walking to the pay-port with the spaceship in his hand. He was stopped in his tracks by a display rack full of memory sticks, each one stamped with a legend that invited customers to *Relive the Hedonian Experience*.

"No need to buy one of those," said Rewind, steering Rung away from the rack. "I'm making my own recording." He bent back his right hand, ejected a memory stick from his wrist, and caught it. "See?"

"It's not that. I've just remembered something. Someone. I've just remembered some*one*."

Rung turned another corner and moved closer to the heart of the ship. He thought he'd be able to hear the dry whine of the quantum engines by now, but no, the silence persisted: epic, devastating, all-encompassing. Until:

"You may have noticed that I'm not much of a conversationist," said Ultra Magnus, turning to look at him for the first time since they'd set off from Rung's office 20 minutes earlier.

"No, no, don't apologize," said Rung quickly, straining to keep up with his companion. "But to be honest, I'm not sure you need to accompany me to Rodimus' quarters."

"Under normal circumstances, I'd agree. But Rodimus may not be in the best of moods."

"Oh. Really? Why's that?"

"Blaster's plan to use the subspace network as a means of communicating with Cybertron has come to nought, we've lost our only lead in terms of locating the Circle of Light, and our quest to find the Knights of Cybertron has all but ground to a halt. In addition, Rodimus is struggling to come to terms with the fact that the aspects of his personality that give him an edge in the field—principally his capacity for quick, decisive action—work against him in a postwar environment in that they encourage him to take unnecessary risks whenever the opportunity arises."

"That was remarkably… succinct. You really are very deliberate with your choice of language, aren't you?"

"I'm not one for padding, if that's what you mean. As far as I'm concerned, each deviation from the point amounts to a minor failure of nerve."

"Fascinating. To you, speech is like a vehicle for conveying information, and you like to get from A to B using as direct a route as possible."

"I beg your pardon? 'Vehicle'…?"

"I didn't literally mean a vehicle... It was a simile."

Ultra Magnus narrowed his optics. "I've spent years weaning myself off figurative language. It clouds the facts. I occasionally resort to a simile if the situation absolutely demands it, but I remain intensely distrustful of extended metaphors."

Rung stared at him, searching for traces of irony. "That follow-up appointment," he said at length. "I'd really encourage you to make it. Or just turn up—my door is always open."

"*Always?* I'm sorry, but your office contains highly sensitive information about members of the crew. As Director of Security I must insist that you lock your door at all times."

"No, again, I don't mean that I literally left the—ah. You're joking." Rung paused, considered his options, and decided he should laugh, but the moment was lost.

"People keep telling me to 'lighten up,'" continued Ultra Magnus, "but whenever I try to make a joke it falls flat." He scaled a flight of stairs in a single stride and waited for Rung to catch up. "Rodimus says it's my delivery. He says—what does he say? He says I sound like someone phoning in a bomb threat."

"I think you just need to find the kind of humor that works for you. And I think that deep down you actually *like* talking to people."

Magnus stopped, raised himself to his full height, and held up his forefinger to signal the impending arrival of another gag.

"If Primus had intended his children to make light conversation he'd have equipped us all with vocal synthesizers." Pause. "Sorry—with more energy-efficient vocal synthesizers. That's right: he'd have equipped us all with more *energy-efficient* vocal synthesizers."

A silence deeper and truer than any Rung had ever known descended upon them both. Minutes stretched into hours. Empires rose and fell. Molecular clouds formed stars that collapsed and went supernova. The universe succumbed to its inevitable heatdeath.

"I should have said energy-efficient vocal synthesizers," said Ultra Magnus quietly, in a manner reminiscent of a pathologist estimating the time of death.

Rung was so embarrassed for his crewmate, and so desperate to change the subject, that he fleetingly considered confessing to a Category A crime. In the end, however, a more natural distraction presented itself.

"What's this?" he said, examining a gold rectangle on the wall outside Rodimus' quarters. "'The captain of the *Lost Light,* Rodimus of Nyon, resided here for the duration of his awesome quest to find the Knights of Cybertron.'" He straightened up and scratched an eyebrow. "A plaque? Isn't that a tad… premature? Not to mention—well, one doesn't have to be a psychiatrist to detect a certain degree of…" He trailed off as he remembered that he was standing next to Rodimus' second-in-command. "I suppose 'arrogance' is too strong a word to use."

"No comment," said Ultra Magnus, directing Rung through a doorway surrounded by stencilled flames that recalled the pattern on Rodimus's chest.

Rodimus sat cross-legged on his desk holding a laser scalpel that he was using to make patterns on its surface. "Rung!" he cried, looking up and flashing the smile that allowed him to get away with pretty much anything. "Take a seat!" He shuffled to the edge of the desk. "You're a psychotherapist, right? What's *wrong* with people? Why am I the only normal one around here?"

Rung realized that Rodimus wasn't joking, but the smile stayed on his face, too embarrassed to move.

"Everyone's miserable," Rodimus continued, "and I can't be doing with it. Yes, we've had some 'setbacks,' but come on! It's got to be better than Cybertron, right?" He looked over at Ultra Magnus, who was in the corner of the room, tidying the furniture. "I said it's got to be better than Cybertron, right?"

"Speaking as someone whose been strangled, attacked by a technoparasite, and taken hostage—and shot in the head—I'm *still* glad I signed up to this quest," said Rung, sincerely. "And I'm certain everyone else feels the same. Everyone who's, um, still alive."

"Thank you, Rung. That's good to hear. Thank you for coming." Rodimus clicked the laser scalpel back on and resumed his doodling.

"Er…" Rung looked helplessly at Ultra Magnus, who put down a table and synthesized a cough.

In the right hands, a cough could be a weapon: properly deployed, it could silence an argument or empty a room. But Ultra Magnus liked to take things to extremes, and in his supersized hands a cough carried the force of a full-scale nuclear assault. An Ultra Magnus cough was loud enough—intimidating enough—to make an army of Decepticons turn and run. Only the Duly Appointed Enforcer of the Tyrest Accord could clear a battlefield by clearing his throat.

Rodimus jumped, snapping his scalpel in two.

"Rung asked to see you," said Magnus patiently. "Not the other way round."

"Oh. Sorry. Sorry, Rung. What did you want to see me about? It's not about visiting Fortress Maximus in the brig, is it? Because I think that's a comically bad idea."

"It's about Red Alert, sir."

The atmosphere in the room changed. Rodimus climbed off his desk and sat down behind it. "Magnus?" he said, without taking his eyes off Rung. "Make sure we're not disturbed."

Ultra Magnus left the room, stopping only to straighten a chair. The door closed behind him.

"You heard about the accident," Rodimus said.

"While I was on shore leave, yes. I heard there was an explosion—something to do with the engine rooms. I've heard various accounts."

"Right," said Rodimus slowly, pretending to be more interested in the broken scalpel.

"Before my own accident, Red Alert paid me a visit. Sir, what I'm about to tell you—you know I'd never divulge confidential patient information unless lives depended on it. You understand that, don't you?"

"What makes you think lives are at stake?"

"Red told me he'd heard a voice—a voice from below decks. From underneath the ship itself. He thought something was going on. And not long after that… he had his accident."

Rodimus leaned forward conspiratorially. "The thing you have to remember about Red Alert," he whispered, "and I'm choosing my words carefully because mental illness is a sensitive subject, and because I respect what you do… but the thing you have to remember about Red Alert is that he's as mad as a bag of scraplets."

"He's *what?*"

"I mean I like him—I like him a lot. And I feel bad that he's out of commission. But…"

Rung snatched the two halves of the scalpel and fixed them back together with an impatient twist of his wrist. "I heard it as well," he said firmly. "The voice." He fixed Rodimus with a stare. "What do you think of *my* mental health?"

"You heard it too?"

"Red recorded it. Put it on a data slug. He played it to me."

Rodimus held up his hands in surrender. "Okay. I'll look into it. First I've got to see Brainstorm about the proton missile launchers, and then—"

"I didn't know we had any proton missile launchers."

"Yeah, we bought from the Hedonians—turns out they're the most well-connected arms dealers in the galaxy. Can you believe it?" Rodimus smiled and shook his head at the thought. "And then I promised Perceptor I'd let him tell me about some scientific discovery or something. There are only so many times you can do a Prime before someone calls you out."

"'Do a Prime...?'"

"When Optimus wanted to get out of doing something he'd say he'd had a Matrix-induced vision and he had to work out what it meant."

Rung looked at him skeptically. "And after Perceptor?"

"After that, as I say, I'll look into it. If there's something going on—and it sounds like there might be—I'll get to the bottom of it."

Rodimus ushered Rung into the corridor and raced off, leaving a scribble of tyre marks in his wake.

"How did it go?" asked Magnus, adjusting the plaque so that it was at right angles to the door.

"Did you hear any of that?"

"No. If Primus had intended for his children to eavesdrop, he'd have—"

Rung laughed. "Actually, I could do with a chat."

"A chat?"

"Don't worry. I'll do all the talking. I just need someone to listen to me."

INTERLUDE ENDS

The journey continues as the crew of the *Lost Light* confronts a band of rogue DECEPTICONS—with terrible consequences. Plus, a visit to the planet Hedonia—and a chance to put recent events behind them. But all the while, locked in a secret cell underneath the *Lost Light,* hidden from the crew, a DECEPTICON psychopath is talking... without opening his mouth. Rodimus and his crew are confronted by an enemy within—and not everyone will survive the encounter.

IDW